

# Paul within Judaism

Edited by  
MICHAEL BIRD,  
RUBEN A. BÜHNER,  
JÖRG FREY,  
and BRIAN ROSNER

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament  
507*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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# Paul within Judaism

Perspectives on Paul and Jewish Identity

Edited by

Michael Bird, Ruben A. Bühner, Jörg Frey,  
and Brian Rosner

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## Preface

Our volume *Paul within Judaism* is based on an on-line scholarly symposium organized by Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia, graciously sponsored by the Australian College of Theology, held during 21–24 September 2021. The topic of exploration was chosen because of the western fascination with the apostle Paul and the persistent challenge of exploring Paul in relation to both his Jewish heritage and his Messiah-believing commitments. In a sense, the tension to be explored or explained is how is Paul both “Paul the Jewish/Judean follower of Jesus” and simultaneously “St. Paul” of the church’s faith and witness. This is the subject which continues to excite and energize scholars in their articulation of both ancient history as well as contemporary theological commitments and informing inter-faith relationships. The contributors to this volume are not monolithic and they represent a plurality of perspectives and diversity of approaches to Paul vis-à-vis ancient Judaism. It is the hope of the editors that this volume will continue the conversation about Paul and his Jewishness, not despite his being a Messiah-believer, but precisely as part of it.

While the conference took place under the aegis of Ridley College, the volume itself would not have been possible without the editorial team of Dr. Michael Bird, Dr. Brian Rosner, Dr. Ruben A. Bühner, and Prof. Jörg Frey, who all made contributions to the editing, production, and publication of this volume. Hopefully we have set a new benchmark in Euro-Antipodean cooperation, bringing Uluru and the Matterhorn (metaphorically) closer together. We remain grateful too for the editorial support of the Mohr Siebeck publishing team for their hard work in bringing this volume to fruition. We also wish to thank Tsion Seyoum Meren for compiling the indices of authors and ancient sources, and Ruben A. Bühner for the index of subjects. In addition, funding to make this volume open access was generously provided by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). The convulsions of COVID meant that such a meeting of learned scholars of religious antiquity and early Christianity were not able to meet in person. We had to settle for an on-line symposium which, though not ideal, proved to be adequate to the ask. A happenstance we hope not to repeat at a future conference on *Paul within Paganism* which will be a natural sequel to this project. Another way of continuing the advancement of Pauline scholarship.

Michael F. Bird

Easter Sunday, 9 April, 2023.



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# An Introduction to the Paul within Judaism Debate

*Michael Bird*

## 1. The Persistence of Pauline Scholarship

I have spent a large part of my scholarly career as a *Neutestamentler* wrestling with the apostle Paul, his life, his letters, and his legacy. The reason for that is quite simple. The study of Paul is inescapable for anyone concerned with the New Testament, the origins of early Christianity, Greco-Roman religion, ancient Judaism, the development of Christian thought, or even the history of western civilization. Paul was unknown to the rich and powerful of his time, he was a divisive figure among those who did know him, and I doubt very much that anybody thought he was destined to become the towering figure of religious and intellectual history that he became. Yet here we are with another scholarly symposium about Paul, another collection of essays about him, and another set of debates and disagreements over him. This volume and the conference it was based on, is but another example of the continuing fascination with Paul in minds of scholars, people of all faiths and none, from different quarters of the globe, representing diverse streams of human experience, who are yet united by their abiding interest in Paul. The scholarship that examines Paul is both deep in its history and now relatively wide in the breadth of people who are drawn to the topic. Paul continues to have much significance for the academy, for those who specialize in the study of religion, and for living communities of faith.

What has become clear to me over the years is that “Paul” stands somewhere between a fragmented mosaic and a Rorschach drawing.

First, studying Paul is like brushing dust off a mosaic in an ancient Ephesian villa. The mosaic contains the face of a human figure and yet the mosaic contains gaps, a few cracked tiles, distortions of colour, and even some tiles that have been secondarily added to mosaic. We cannot and therefore do not see Paul as he really was, only as he was presented by the artist, and even that presentation is fragmentary. That is not to say we cannot see, understand, or know anything about Paul, but our knowledge of Paul is mediated as it is imperfect. The quest for the historical Paul is the quest for the Paul who is the most recoverable and plausible portrait of a historical figure of antiquity. Alas, we shall never find the holy grail that is Paul as his pure self, only Paul as apostle, author, and artwork, Paul as martyr and memory, Paul as a diaspora Jew and a symbol of Christian faith.

Second, studying Paul is also like gazing at a Rorschach drawing. I say that because Paul is a figure read from history and read into history, a subject of exegesis and eisegesis, an extrapolation and a projection, someone other than us and a mirror of us. It is not exaggeration to say that every book about Paul tells you something about Paul and something about the researcher of Paul! A biography of Paul, an introduction to his letters, a description of his religion, or a summation of his thought, is never done in isolation from one's own biography, one's own proclivities, and one's own religious atmosphere. That is not to say that the study of Paul is purely a mirror, as if all we think we know about Paul is only what we project onto him. I don't believe the domain Pauline studies is reducible to an exercise in interpretive self-construction.

But it is incontestably true that the study of Paul is determined very much by context, the context that Paul is placed in, and the context that interpreters find themselves within. E.P. Sanders acknowledges that his own comparative study of Paul and Palestinian Judaism was not prescriptive. Palestinian Judaism simply provided the analogue against which Paul's own religious pattern could be compared. Sanders writes:

Lots of people think that ... somewhere in the pages of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* there is a claim that Paul must be discussed only in the light of Jewish sources of Palestinian origin. There is no such claim: I merely compared him with the material that I had spent ten years studying.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, to study Paul in the context Palestinian Judaism remains a choice and the choices are ample.

Thus, it makes an immense difference if one tries to situate Paul *in the context* of the Qumran scrolls, intra-Jewish sectarianism, itinerant philosophers, Greco-Roman associations, imperial cults, Plutarch's account of Hellenistic religion, Iranian Manicheism, Jewish *hekhalot* traditions, new religious movements, millenarianism, or ancient accounts of gender and ethnicity. Similarly, it matters much if one studies Paul *from the context* of fifth century North African Christianity, a twelfth century Parisian monastery, intra-Protestant debates of the sixteenth century, among Indian civil rights lawyers in nineteenth century Delhi, in African-American churches in Atlanta in the 1960s, or in a Critical Theory class at Stanford University in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Context shapes the purpose of study, the language of enquiry, and the results of research.

The meaning of Paul, that is, the coherences that we try to draw about him, are really the fusion of these ancient and modern contexts. Pauline scholarship consists of the backdrop we place Paul in combined with the lens we manufac-

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<sup>1</sup> E.P. Sanders, "Between Judaism and Hellenism," in *Saint Paul among the Philosophers*, ed. Jack Caputa (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 75.

ture to try to understand him. There are of course different ways of doing that, different ways of locating Paul and looking at Paul.

One could generalize that recent study of the apostle Paul and his letters breaks down into roughly five camps: Roman Catholic approaches, traditional Protestant interpretation, the New Perspective on Paul, the Apocalyptic Paul, and Paul within Judaism.<sup>2</sup> Yes, there are other tribes and trends too. Yes, these are not rigid divisions, each is diverse in its own way, but I think the generalization holds true.

## 2. Introducing Paul within Judaism

### 2.1 *The Many Perspectives on Paul as Jewish and in Judaism*

One recent trend in Pauline scholarship is known as *Paul within Judaism*, which is a collection of scholars committed to the project of studying Paul in his Jewish context. So rather than speak merely of Paul *and* Judaism, they are inclined to speak of Paul's Judaism.<sup>3</sup> Most commonly, Paul is described as a Jewish figure, addressing Jewish concerns, engaged in Jewish moral, cultic, and scriptural reasonings with a view to attaining a better grasp of Paul in comparative religious history. By situating Paul *within* Judaism, proponents appear to mean studying the apostle Paul and his letters in relationship to the Jewish people and cultus, reconsidering Paul's Jewish identity and his own Jewish devotion, reassessing the relationship of Paul's Gentile Messiah-believing converts to Jewish communities, and (in some cases) seeking to cultivate better inter-religious relationships between Jews and Christians. It means too, put negatively, avoiding the anachronism of thinking of Paul as a "Christian" theologian, stripping away caricatures of Judaism as a "religion" of "legalism" or "ethnocentrism," undermining the presupposition that sets Paul's discourse against Jews and Judaism, and exposing anti-Jewish perspectives in Pauline scholarship. The "Paul within Judaism" movement (PwJ) – we cannot call it a faction or school – bears these general characteristics, though it has its own internal diversities.

The PwJ network of scholars is not a thunderbolt out of the blue, there are precursors and forerunners. There has been a long history of Jewish intellectuals wrestling with Paul as a figure of Jewish antiquity and as an agent of Chris-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Michael F. Bird, ed., *Four Views on the Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012); N.T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (London: SPCK, 2015); Scot McKnight and B.J. Oropeza, eds., *Perspectives on Paul: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020); Ben Witherington and Jason A. Myers, *Voices and Views on Paul: Exploring Scholarly Trends* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?" in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 117–60.

tian anti-Semitism.<sup>4</sup> One can see important pioneers in the studies of William D. Davies and Johannes Munck who were among the first scholars in the post *Shoah* era to reconsider Paul as a consistently Jewish figure.<sup>5</sup> In addition, a very underappreciated figure is Markus Barth, son of the great Swiss Theologian Karl Barth. Barth the younger argued for rethinking Paul's *Jewishness* and re-framing Jewish-Christian inter-faith relations in such a way that was decades ahead of its time. For Barth, Paul's account of "justification by faith" was not a polemical doctrine, but an ecumenical one, Paul's attempt to unite rather than divide Jewish and Gentile Christians.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Barth believed that it was possible to envisage Paul, even *saint* Paul, as a "good Jew." What was required to do that was for Christian theologians to forfeit their superiority complex and supersessionist impulses as well as reject condescending and caricatured views of Jewish legalism.<sup>7</sup> Barth's contention, banally self-evident as it might sound now, was revolutionary back in 1960s and 70s, i.e., the apostle Paul needs to be rethought and even reclaimed as Jewish thinker. Further, a corollary of a Jewish re-imagining of Paul was that inter-faith ecumenical relationships between Jews and Christians need to be refreshed.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Donald A. Hagner, "Paul in Modern Jewish Thought," in *Pauline Studies*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (FS F.F. Bruce; Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 143–65; Stefan Meißner, *Die Heimholung des Ketzers: Studien zur jüdischen Auseinandersetzung mit Paulus*, WUNT 2/87 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); William D. Davies, "Paul: from the Jewish Point of View," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 3 – The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, William D. Davies, and John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.678–730; Sung-Hee Lee-Linker, ed., *Paulus der Jude: Seine Stellung im christlich-jüdischen Dialog heute* (Frankfurt a.M.: Lembeck, 2005); Michael F. Bird and Preston Sprinkle, "Jewish Interpretation of Paul in the Last Thirty Years," *CBR* 6 (2008): 355–76; Daniel R. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); John Gager, "The Rehabilitation of Paul in Jewish Tradition," in *The One Who Sows Bountifully: Essays in Honor of Stanley K. Stowers*, ed. Caroline J. Hodge, Saul M. Olyan, Daniel Ullucci, and Emma Wasserman (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2013), 29–41; Patrick Gray, *Paul as a Problem of History and Culture: The Apostle and His Critics Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 117–41.

<sup>5</sup> William D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948) and Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1959); idem, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> Markus Barth, "Jews and Gentiles: The Social Character of Justification in Paul," *JES* 5 (1968): 241–67.

<sup>7</sup> Markus Barth, "Der gute Jude Paulus," in *Richte unsere Füße auf den Weg des Friedens*, ed. Andreas Baudis, Dieter Clausert, Volkhard Schliski, and Bernhard Wegener, FS Helmut Gollwitzer (München: Christian Kaiser, 1979), 107–37; repr. "St. Paul – A Good Jew," *HBT* 1 (1979): 7–45. See reflections on Markus Barth's article by Stanley E. Porter, "Was Paul a Good Jew? Fundamental Issues in a Current Debate," in *Christian-Jewish Relations Through the Centuries*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Brook W.R. Pearson, JSNTSup 192 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 148–74.

The cluster of scholarship called “The New Perspective on Paul” (NPP), associated with luminaries such as E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright, Terence Donaldson, and Bruce Longenecker among others was an important precursor to PwJ.<sup>8</sup> The NPP largely accepted Sanders’ view that first century Palestinian Judaism was not a religion of works-righteousness, a type of moralistic legalism, but expressed what Sanders called “covenantal nomism,” a salvific scheme typified by an efficacious divine election and means of covenantal grace. But, if Judaism was not legalistic as Protestants had imagined, a legalism for which Paul’s gospel of grace was the antithesis and antidote, then what did Paul find wrong with Judaism? Sanders’ answer was that in Paul’s mind the problem was that Judaism was not “Christianity,” it had not experienced or embraced God’s revelation of salvation in the Messiah. Yet that was considered too simplistic an explanation. Instead, it was argued, that Paul’s problem was not a lack of grace in Judaism, but a belief that God’s grace was reserved only for Jews to the exclusion of Gentiles. In other words, the problem was not legalism but trusting in a “national righteousness,” an “ethnocentric covenantalism,” or an “ethnocentric nomism,” that is, clinging to the Jewish way of life as codified in the Torah, summed up as righteousness by “works of the law.”

The gain of the NPP was that Paul was now studied as a figure within Judaism, not as a Protestant tackling medieval anxieties about how to find a merciful God, nor attacking synergistic and sacramental theologies of salvation, and not an existentialist philosopher on a quest for authenticity. Paul was not interested in the question of whether justification entailed an imputation of Jesus’s active obedience by faith alone in opposition to an infusion of grace to energize believers to work out their faith in charitable deeds. Rather, Paul was dealing with Jewish questions: Do Gentiles have to become Jews in order to be followers of Jesus?<sup>9</sup> How do Christ-believing Jews and Gentiles inhabit the same spaces, eat at the same tables, worship in the same tenement when Gentiles have regarded the Jews as misanthropists and Jews have regarded Gentiles as polluted with ignorance, idolatry, immorality, and impurity? The NPP made better sense historically, and it operated on the premise that Paul was not against the Jewish

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Hans Hübner, “Zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion über die Theologie des Paulus,” *JBTh* 7 (1992): 399–413; Kent L. Yinger, *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011); Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 88–154; Garwood P. Anderson, *Paul’s New Perspective: Charting a Soteriological Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Or as E. P. Sanders (*Paul: The Apostles’ Life, Letters, and Thought* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015], 8–9 put it: “The major theological battle of his career was whether or not gentiles (non-Jews) who accepted Jesus must also become Jewish by being circumcised and accepting other parts of the Jewish law that separated Jew from gentile. Paul argued vociferously that his converts could remain gentiles, though they had to accept Jewish monotheism and most aspects of Jewish ethics.”

religion as much as he was transforming it around a particular story of Israel's Messiah.<sup>10</sup>

That is not to say that the NPP did not have its own failings or shortcomings.<sup>11</sup> To begin with, Sanders himself was operating with a liberal Protestant view whereby a religion of grace is eminently better than one of merit; yet that constituted a theological judgment, not a historical one. Plus, Sanders had reiterated the discontinuity between Paul and Judaism by postulating that Paul had replaced "covenantal nomism" with "participation in Christ." In addition, Jewish soteriologies of the Persian, Hellenistic, Second Temple, and Rabbinic periods were not monolithic, there were "variegated" understandings of the purpose of Torah-observance and different "efficacies" as to the nature of divine grace.<sup>12</sup> It is hazardous to over-generalize as to the substance, scope, and instrument of salvation among all Jews and Jewish literature. There was also the danger that the NPP reduced Paul's account of righteousness or justification to a socio-epiphenomenon of in-group identity status and negated the apocalyptic and theocentric texture of Paul's whereby a believer's status vis-à-vis God and the final judgment was at stake. There was also a caricatured dismissal of the Medieval and Reformed traditions as misreaders of Paul rather than appreciating them in their own right as part of the trajectory of Pauline reception.<sup>13</sup> Fi-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, CITM 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 522–30; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, COQG 4 (London: SPCK, 2014), 1407–72.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. e.g., A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004); Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 88–112; idem, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 20; Anderson, *Paul's New Perspective*, 15–56; Kathy Ehrensperger, *Search Paul: Conversations with the Jewish Apostle to the Nations*, WUNT 429 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 353–75.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Mark A. Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 245–307; Donald A. Carson, "Summaries and Conclusions," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1: *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Donald A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark Seifrid (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 543–8; Bird, *Saving Righteousness*, 93–4, 179–94; Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, xvii, 12–9; A. Andrew Das, "Paul and the Law: Pressure Points in the Debate," in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 99–116, here 101; Daniel M. Gurtner, ed., *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism*, LSTS 74 (London: T&T Clark, 2011); Gabriele Boccaccini, "Inner-Jewish Debate on the Tension between Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Development*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon G. Gathercole (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 9–26; Preston M. Sprinkle, *Paul and Judaism Revisited: A Study of Divine and Human Agency in Salvation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 208–38; Jacob Thiessen, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Evangelium im Römerbrief: Die Rechtfertigungslehre des Paulus im Vergleich zu antiken jüdischen Auffassungen und zur neuen Paulusperspektive* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 112–37; David Lincicum, Ruth Sheridan, and Charles M. Stang, eds., *Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, WUNT 420 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and*



nally, one could also argue that the NPP continued with the Christian tradition of essentializing Judaism, that is, reducing Judaism to the negative foil for Paul's gospel, with the exception that the NPP had replaced Jewish "legalism" with Jewish "nationalism." The Jews remained the villains and are directly or indirectly vilified as opponents of Paul, Paul's Christ, and Paul's God.

Some, however, taking their cue from the NPP, wanted to go further, and argue that Paul himself had no contention with Jews and Judaism. Paul's gospel was about messianic salvation for Gentiles, a gospel which left the Jewish covenant and Jewish way of life completely intact, without any need for conversion or consolation. Such a view was initially identified as the "Radical Paul" (RP) since the RP represented a more radicalized approach to reimagining a Jewish Paul. To give one example, John Gager argues that for Paul, "The law remains in effect for who are circumcised." In fact, "Paul's affirmation of the law's continued validity for Israel" means that there can be no "End-time conversion of Israel to Christ." Paul does not envisage a *Sonderweg* for Israel, for the Jewish covenant remains effective. To the contrary, what Paul "taught and preached" says Gager, "was instead a special path, a *Sonderweg*, for Gentiles."<sup>14</sup>

The RP never really caught on or displaced the NPP as the resident paradigm for Pauline studies to rival traditional Protestant and Catholic interpretations. That said, out of the NPP and RP was birthed the PwJ network. PwJ can be viewed, in some ways, as a follow-up to the NPP, or else as a mopping up exercise to dot the "i's" and cross the "t's" and correct a few motifs that the NPP mistook. PwJ is perhaps the NPP with a kippah!<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2 *Paul within Judaism: A Preliminary Appreciation*

PwJ is among the most exciting and controversial avenues for studying Paul because it is testing many old assumptions and positing fresh proposal on Paul vis-à-vis Judaism. There is no single manifesto or definitive publication of its aims or ambitions.<sup>16</sup> I'd aver that above all, PwJ is marked out by the claim that

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*His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); Michael Bachmann and Johannes Woyke, eds., *Lutherische und neue Paulusperspektive: Beiträge zu einem Schlüsselproblem der gegenwärtigen exegetischen Diskussion*, WUNT 182 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Stephen J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 146.

<sup>15</sup> According to Ehrensperger (*Searching Paul*, 373) what the NPP, RP, and PwJ share is interest in plotting the social position and theological identity of Paul's Christ-following groups.

<sup>16</sup> Note should be taken of Paula Fredriksen's contributions, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2017); idem, "What Does It Mean to See Paul 'within Judaism,'" *JBL* 141 (2022): 359–80. A few edited collections by Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015); Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia, eds., *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress,



Paul's Jewishness and Judaism are neither tacit nor token, neither theoretical nor formal, but lay at the core of his identity, mission, and something he practiced even as a Messiah-confessor. Beyond that axiom several other claims and insights stand out.

First, PwJ scholars are freshly probing the meaning of Ἰουδαῖος ("Jew/Judean") and Ἰουδαϊσμός ("Judaism").

To begin with, there is the extant debate as to whether Ἰουδαῖος should be treated as an ethnic, religious, or geographical identifier (or a mixture thereof).<sup>17</sup> While the translation "Judean" gained favor for a time, and in some contexts is an appropriate translation,<sup>18</sup> there is a general recognition now that "Jew" might be preferable given that Ἰουδαῖος communicates a mixture of common ancestry and shared custom which transcends the geographical confines of Judea.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, there is a recognition that Ἰουδαϊσμός means the Jewish/Judean way of life.<sup>20</sup> The complicating fact is that Judaism was of course diverse, some even prefer to speak of "Judaisms" in the plural, a semantic innovation made from observing the pluriformity of Jewish communities and practices even if "Judaisms" is an ultimately unsatisfying nomenclature.<sup>21</sup> In any case, there were

2016); František Ábel, ed., *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism* (Lanham: Lexington, 2020). Useful summaries are Mark D. Nanos, "A Jewish View," in *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*, ed. Michael F. Bird (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 159–92 and Magnus Zetterholm, "The Paul within Judaism Perspective," in *Perspectives on Paul: Five Views*, ed. Scot McKnight and B.J. Oropeza (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020), 171–218.

<sup>17</sup> See survey in David M. Miller, "Ethnicity, Religion, and the Meaning of *Ioudaios* in Ancient 'Judaism,'" *CBR* 12 (2014): 216–65; and more recent discussion in Jason A. Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 11–21; Matthew V. Novenson, *Paul Then and Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), 25–31.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g., Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 63–74; Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512; Steve Mason and Philip F. Esler, "Judean and Christ-Follower Identities: Grounds for a Distinction," *NTS* 62 (2016): 439–60.

<sup>19</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 404; Michael F. Bird, *Crossing over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 13–6; idem, *An Anomalous Jew*, 47–8.

<sup>20</sup> BDAG, 479.

<sup>21</sup> According to J. Andrew Overman (*Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to Matthew* [Valley Forge, PA: TPL, 1996], 9): "So varied was Jewish society in the land of Israel in this period, and so varied were the Jewish groups, that scholars no longer speak of Judaism in the singular when discussing this formative and fertile period in Jewish history. Instead, we speak about Judaisms. In this time and place, there existed a number of competing, even rival Judaisms." However, James C. Vanderkam ("Judaism in the Land of Israel," in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012], 70–94, here 91) rejects the language of "Judaisms" because: "The surviving evidence exhibits a richness and diversity in the Judaism of the Second Temple era, a diversity so great that some have resorted to the neologism 'Judaisms' to express it. Yet, despite the undoubted diversity present in the texts, there are fundamental

different ways of adhering to and living out Jewishness in Judea and the Diaspora. In addition, in Christian interpretation, the term “Judaism” has become defined as the negative foil or anti-thesis to Christianity.<sup>22</sup> In other words, “Judaism” was “invented” to be the darkness against which the luminous brightness of Pauline grace shone so brightly. We can certainly contest or qualify any attempt to provide a simplistic account of the “parting of the ways” between Christianity and Judaism, just as we need caution as to the reification of Jewishness and Christian-ness as discreet identities.<sup>23</sup> The PwJ claim is that the juxtaposition of Judaism and Christianity as distinct and even competing religions owes much to (mis)readings of Paul rather than something intended by Paul, misreadings that need to be corrected.

This is why one of the most significant passages to draw attention in PwJ scholarship is Gal 1:13–14 where Paul narrates to the Galatians, “You have heard of my former way of life in Judaism” (Ἡκούσατε γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ). What is Paul contrasting here? Does Paul contrast his former way of life in Judaism with his current way of life as a Christ-follower that is post-Judaism? Or, does Paul contrast his former way in Judaism with his current way of life in Judaism as a Christ-follower?<sup>24</sup> Given Paul’s commitment to Torah, monotheism, avoiding idolatry, affirming Israel’s eschatological hopes, messianic devotion, and immersing Gentile in such things, it makes no sense to speak of his abandonment of Judaism.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, Paul does make a sharp and jarring contrast between his former and current modes of life with respect to Judaism. Perhaps the solution is that Paul here means “Judaism” is a particular sense, not as his dislocation from or denunciation of the entire ethno-reli-

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beliefs and practices that would have been accepted by virtually all Jews during those centuries and that justify retaining the singular noun Judaism.” See also E.P. Sanders, “Common Judaism Explored,” in *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism*, ed. Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 11–23, on balancing unity and diversity in ancient Judaism.

<sup>22</sup> See esp. Ignatius, *Phild.* 6.1; *Magn.* 8.1; 10.3. While Justin Martyr’s *Dialogues with Trypho* does not use the term “Judaism,” nonetheless, Justin’s presentation of the Jewish tradition is as a precursor and preparation for the gospel, while also obsolete and even superseded by Christian faith. See Daniel Boyarin, “Justin Martyr Invents Judaism,” *Church History* 70 (2001): 427–61; idem, “Why Ignatius Invented Judaism,” in *The Ways that Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus*, ed. Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Thiessen (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008), 309–24.

<sup>23</sup> On such cautions, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism*, TSAJ 171 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 82–4.

<sup>24</sup> See discussion in Susan D. Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 33–43; Markus Cromhout, “Paul’s ‘Former Conduct in the Judean Way of Life’ (Gal 1:13) ... or Not?” *HTST* 63 (2009): 1–12; David Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 44–6; Daniel Boyarin, “*Ioudaismos* within Paul: A Modified Reading of Gal 1:13–14,” in Åbel, *The Message of Paul*, 167–78.

<sup>25</sup> Rightly Novenson, *Paul Then and Now*, 47–50.

gion of the Jews, but as referring to his dereliction of a zealous and fanatical mode of Judaism, the Pharisaic tradition.<sup>26</sup> It was this zealous Judeanism which drove his persecution of the churches, who were in his mind, a rogue messianic cult,<sup>27</sup> who were lowering the currency of Israel's election and contaminating Israel's capacity to worship God in holiness by fraternizing with Gentiles and by venerating Jesus in unusually intense ways. In other words, what Paul rejects is a post-Maccabean species of sectarian Judaism typified by its zeal for national holiness and pharisaic *halakhah*.<sup>28</sup> Whatever solution is preferred, such texts are ground zero in PwJ to wrestle with Paul's Jewish identity as well as his many aggravated denials and relentless affirmations with respect to his Christ-following devotion.

PwJ scholarship, therefore, attempts to explore Paul's language of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰουδαϊσμός with greater lexical precision, informed by ancient notions of ethnicity and religious identity, and without the baggage of essentializing Jews and Judaism as the anti-type to Christianity.

Second, PwJ scholars take it as axiomatic that Paul himself was Torah-observant. Paul strenuously rejects the imposition of Torah observance upon Gentiles, especially circumcision and food laws, yet never implies that Jews should cease from observing the Torah.<sup>29</sup> As such, Paul's remarks that the Torah is not nullified but upheld by faith in Christ are taken seriously (Rom 3:31). Paul negates the need for proselytism for Gentiles to be Christ-followers, that is, he rejects compelling them to judaize to the point of circumcision (see Josephus, *Bell.* 2.454) as part of allegiance to Christ (Rom 3:21–4:25; 1 Cor 7:18–20; Gal 5:1–11; 6:12–16) and as the condition for table fellowship in the church (Gal 2:1–21).<sup>30</sup> While Paul would not permit Titus to be circumcised under duress (Gal 2:3), yet the Lucan Paul consented for Timothy to be circumcised which sounds plausible enough (Acts 16:1–3). An interesting qualification is that Paul does in

<sup>26</sup> Paul as a Jewish Christ-believing convert speaks of "Judaism" the same way an ex-Muslim Christian might speak of "Jihadism." Not all Judaism is about zealous and pharisaic traditions just as not all of Islam is about jihad.

<sup>27</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostles' Life, Letters, and Thought*, 194–5, 494.

<sup>28</sup> See Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 22–4; Matthew V. Novenson, "Paul's Former Occupation in *Ioudaismos*," in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letter*, ed. Mark W. Elliott, Scott J. Hafemann, and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 24–39; Boyarin, "Ioudaismos within Paul," 173–5.

<sup>29</sup> See Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Offene Fragen zur Gesetzespraxis bei Paulus und seinen Gemeinden (Sabbat, Speisegebote, Beschneidung)," *BThZ* 25 (2008): 16–51.

<sup>30</sup> Whether Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to "convert" to Judaism was a matter of considerable contention even among Jewish communities. Josephus's account of the conversion/circumcision of King Izates of Adiabene is case in point (*Ant.* 20.34–48) and backgrounds the discussion of Gentile circumcision in Acts 15, Galatians 2–5, and Romans 1–4. On which, see Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 97–9 and Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

a sense compel Gentile converts to partially judaize, insofar as that he requires Gentiles Christ-believers to avoid idolatry, sexual immorality, to affirm monotheism, messianism, Israel's election, the divine origins and authority of the Torah, and prophetic hopes for the future.<sup>31</sup> Paul's own Torah-adherence and imposition of some aspects of Torah on Christ-believing Gentiles undermines the entire notion of a Torah-free gospel or a law vs. grace dichotomy.

Paul and the Torah is undoubtedly one of the most complex topics in Pauline interpretation. True, Paul does say some rather jarring things about himself in relation to the Torah (e.g., Gal 2:19; Rom 7:4; 14:14; 1 Cor 9:19–23) and the very nature of the Torah itself (e.g., Rom 5:20; 7:5; 8:2; 1 Cor 15:56). Be that as it may, there is nothing immensely improbable about Paul adhering to the Torah by either habit or conviction, something emphasized particularly by Luke (e.g., Acts 21:20–25). It remains, then, entirely possible that Paul would have circumcised his son if he had one! The PwJ collective suggests that's Paul adherence to rather than abrogation of the Torah should be the presumption unless otherwise proven. Furthermore, Paul's own Torah-observance and his requirement for some adherence to the Torah for Gentiles puts to rest any claim that Paul's gospel is Law-free or that Law and Gospel exist in radical antithesis.

Third, PwJ scholars wrestle with the identity of Paul's Gentile Christ-believers. PwJ scholars are generally allergic to identifying the Pauline Gentile-majority assemblies of Christ-believers as incorporated into Israel, as "true Jews," or even as a "third race." There is a concerted effort to affirm them as non-Jews with adherence to a messianic *halakhah* appropriate for Gentiles in a new eschatological age. Paul's discourse effectively dissolves the hazy category of "God-fearer" (θεοσεβής) by assigning an in-group identity to Gentiles through messianism and a low-level of Torah adherence.<sup>32</sup> Yet his Gentile converts are neither "proselytes" nor "Jews," which raises the question as to what it means for Gentiles to be τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ ("the assembly of God"). They are not Jews, but messianic judaizing pagans.<sup>33</sup>

Fourth, PwJ remain critical of any reading of Paul that has a whiff of supersessionism about it. The tradition of Christian superiority over Judaism, stereotypical accounts of Judaism, and the Church replacement of Israel as God's peo-

<sup>31</sup> Rightly, Paula Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 50; Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagan's Apostle*, 111.

<sup>33</sup> The PwJ network is very diverse and eclectic, drawing a wide range of adherents from various spheres. It is a peculiarity that the distinction posited between Jews and Gentile Christians means that the PwJ has attracted several American Dispensational theologians to its ranks. On Dispensationalism, see Benjamin L. Merkle, *Continuity and Discontinuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 26–107. The PwJ is then a "broad church" in that it encompasses a mixture of Jewish scholars, secular academics, Dispensational theologians, and others as part of its project to press for a Jewish reading of Paul and to maintain the distinction between the church and Israel.

ple can still be detected in some strands of Pauline scholarship. The PwJ conglomerate is vigilant in critiquing anything that seeks to rehabilitate old prejudices and give currency to any position that veers close to supersessionism. In some ways, PwJ is an anti-supersessionist project, one easy to appreciate after reading European scholarship prior to the 1940s or even social media posts in the 2020s!

### 2.3 *Paul within Judaism: A Preliminary Critique*

It is because of the PwJ collective, as well as its precursors, that we now have books that espouse a nakedly Jewish Paul. Titles such as *Rabbi Paul*, *Paul was not a Christian*, *Paul the Jew*, and *Paul, a New Covenant Jew* situate Paul, quite rightly, in the context of the Judaism and early antiquity. The contribution of PwJ is surely to be welcomed, however, just as with all scholarship, it cannot be received uncritically. There are several criticisms that can be lodged against it.

First, “Paul was not a *Christian* – a word that was in any case completely unknown to him because it had not yet been invented. He was a Jew who understood himself to be on a divine mission” declares Eisenbaum (ἀμήν!) and “Paul was and remained a Jew” says Sanders (ἀμήν!).<sup>34</sup> Yet Paul’s Jewishness needs an adjective.<sup>35</sup> To affirm that Paul is a Jew is to simultaneously say something and to say nothing. It is “something” in the sense that Paul should be identified as and among the Jews of Judea and the Diaspora. His own testimony and that of Luke tell us as much (Gal 2:15; Phil 3:5; 2 Cor 11:22; Rom 9:3–4; Acts 21:39; 22:3). Even so, to say that Paul is Jewish is to say “nothing” precisely because of the diversities among Jews about their Judaism. We are required to ask about Paul, “What sort of Jew?” One need only compare Philo, John the Baptist, Honi the Circle Drawer, Rabbi Gamaliel, Rabbi Akiba, the Qumranite Teacher of Righteousness, Caiaphas, Tiberius Alexander, and Simon bar Kokhba to observe the spectrum of beliefs and praxes and as well as the complicated relations between Jews. How does Paul’s messianic eschatology fit within Judaism and situate him in relation to other Jews and their respective views of each other? Paul in the very least was an “idiosyncratic” or even “anomalous” Jew because of his messianic faith and its social corollaries among Jewish and Gentile

<sup>34</sup> Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: Harper One, 2009), 4 (italics original); E. P. Sanders, *Comparing Judaism and Christianity: Common Judaism Paul and the Inner and the Outer in Ancient Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 231.

<sup>35</sup> Contra Pamela Eisenbaum (“Paul, Polemics, and The Problem of Essentialism,” *BibInt* 13 [2005]: 224–238, here 228): “Paul as Jewish – period, that is, without qualifiers”; and Fredriksen (“What Does It Mean to See Paul ‘within Judaism,’” 378–9): “Why is it so difficult to think of Paul, without apology, as a practicing Jew? Not an anomalous Jew or an exceptional Jew (though that is certainly how he thought of himself [Phil 3:6]), but just as an *ancient* Jew, one of any number of whom in the late Second Temple period expected the end of days in their lifetimes?” (italics original).

Christ-believers. One wonders then, if the PwJ establishment has, despite its robust affirmation of Paul's Jewishness, failed to place Paul within the spectrum of Judaism and to work out his relationship to other Jews.

Second, following on from the above point, PwJ advocates have tended to down-play the negative reception that Paul received from other Jews of the Diaspora and Judea. We should welcome the observation that many of Paul's arguments, made in places like Galatians, are primarily an intra-Jewish Christ-believing debate, narrating Paul's response as a Jewish Christ-believer against other Jewish Christ-believers concerning the means for turning pagans into proper Christ-followers. It is something of an internecine debate rather than an exercise in the *contra Ioudaeus* tradition. One too can recognize that when Paul says that "Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one" (2 Cor 11:24) that itself could demonstrate his willingness to voluntarily submit to synagogue discipline within a Jewish diaspora community.<sup>36</sup> But it also tells us something of Paul's own negative reception from his fellow Jews. Paul himself asked the Romans to pray for his return to Jerusalem that he would be rescued from the "unbelievers in Judea" (i.e., Jews) and that his collection would be "acceptable to the saints" in Jerusalem (i.e., the Jewish Christ-believing assemblies) (Rom 15:31). Paul may well have been accused by Jewish observers of being a law-breaker (Rom 3:7–8; Acts 21:20–25), eating unclean foods (Rom 14:14), rejecting Israel's inherited privileges (Rom 9:3–5), blasphemy (1 Cor 1:23), idolatry (1 Cor 8:1–2), and fraternizing with Gentiles (Gal 2:11–16). Paul might well have protested that he was still "in Judaism" precisely because of rather in spite of his messianic faith, but that does nothing to prove that his claim would be met with common affirmation by fellow Jews who may have considered him somewhere between fanatical, maniacal, misguided, or apostate. Jens Schröter teases this point out that Paul within Judaism is a matter of perspective:

From the view of a Roman citizen or a civic authority Paul may have been regarded as a Jew who followed Jewish customs, caused trouble among his fellow Jews and even tried to convince Romans to take over Jewish customs. This perspective is described in Acts 16 to 19, even if Luke's depiction of Paul's relationship to Jews and Gentiles follows a specific agenda of portraying Paul as a faithful Jew who brought the message of Jesus to the non-Jewish world. From the perspective of his Jewish contemporaries Paul may have been regarded as an apostate who not only dismissed Jewish purity rules but also endangered the integrity of Jewish communities with his message of the elimination of the differences between Jews and Gentiles. From the perspective of communities of Christ believers Paul may have been regarded as a Jew with a remarkable freedom towards the openness of God's people for Gentiles who do not even need to be circumcised or to

<sup>36</sup> See E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982), 192 for whom "punishment implies inclusion." Though note Markus Oehler, "The Punishment of Thirty-Nine Lashes (2 Corinthians 11:24) and the Place of Paul in Judaism," *JBL* 140 (2021): 623–40, who argues that corporal punishment was not permitted by Diaspora synagogues, rather, it was exercised by local authorities in Judea and Galilee.

observe the Sabbath. Paul may also have appeared to them as very restrictive and conservative with regard to regulations for sexual behavior and table fellowship with their Greek or Roman fellows. Paul himself may have answered the question, “Are you a Jew?” with: “I am an Israelite, a son of Abraham, who believes in the one and only God and in his son Jesus Christ.”<sup>37</sup>

Third, a Torah-observant Paul solves a lot of problems but also generates several more. Jon C. Olson resonates with PwJ proponents when he argues that “Paul remains within Judaism and observed the Torah, but opposed full Torah observance for Gentiles.”<sup>38</sup> True, Paul is primarily concerned about Gentile (partial) non-adherence to the Torah, nonetheless, he reasons that conviction from Jewish experience of the Torah (cf. Acts 15:10). Joshua Garroway is insightful on this point:

No one disputed that Pau[l]’s ostensible aim in Gal 3:1–29 is to demonstrate for Gentiles why they should not yoke themselves to the Law, but he does not make his case by suggesting that the Law has lost its significance for Gentiles alone. On the contrary, Paul constructs his argument around the historical experience of the Jews [hence the “we” verbs in Gal 3:23–25], concluding that faith has replaced the Law as the mode by which *Jews* relate to God. All the more so, Paul intimates, Gentiles would be foolish to pursue the Law.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, many of Paul’s statements about the Torah remain nakedly provocative and jarring on any Jewish metric. For all of Paul’s casual caveats that he upholds the Torah (Rom 3:31) and that the Torah of God is good, holy, spiritual (Rom 7:12, 14, 16, 25), he still identifies the Torah as bound up with sin and death (1 Cor 15:56; 2 Cor 3:6; Rom 7:5; 8:2), bringing wrath (Rom 4:15), magnifying transgression (Rom 5:20), unleashing curses (Gal 3:10–14), somehow reaching a terminus in the Messiah (Rom 10:4). Paul declared too that he and his assemblies have died to the Torah (Gal 2:19; Rom 7:4).<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to square these statements with contemporary Jewish attitudes towards the Torah. It is precisely such statements, when carved out of their context, which gave succor to the diverse antitheses between Law and Gospel that characterized the Christian tradition from Marcion to Rudolf Bultmann! This observation does not require returning to the caricature of Pauline grace versus Jewish Law, but Paul

<sup>37</sup> Jens Schröter, “Was Paul a Jew Within Judaism? The Apostle to the Gentiles and His Communities in Their Historical Context,” in *Jews and Christians – Parting Ways in the First Two Centuries CE?*, ed. Matthias Konradt, Judith Lieu, Laura Nasrallah, Jens Schröter, and Gregory E. Sterling, BZNTW 253 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 89–119, here 114.

<sup>38</sup> John C. Olson, “Supersessionism or Mutual Blessing on the Menu? Christ-Following Gentiles Dining among Christ-Following Jews,” *Pro Ecclesia* 31 (2022): 321–349, here 348.

<sup>39</sup> Joshua Garroway, “Paul: Without Judaism, Without Law,” in *Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. David Lincicum, Ruth Sheridan, and Charles M. Stang, WUNT 420 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 49–66, here 57.

<sup>40</sup> Garroway (“Paul,” 56 n. 22) notes that “Paul’s declaration of death to the Law generally escapes the notice of commentators of this radical new perspective”.



does appear as a “radical Jew” says Garroway, “within Judaism, trying to make sense of an acute messianic reality by mobilizing Jewish texts, Jewish terms, and Jewish ideas.”<sup>41</sup> The result of Paul’s messianic recasting of his Israelite heritage was disruptive, even anarchic, for the proselytism of Gentiles and even for the pragmatic realities of Torah observance for Jews.

One might retort that it is not Paul’s attitude towards the Torah that would be affronting, but only his specific *halakhah* that would cause offense.<sup>42</sup> However, Paul does seem to have either a chronological, functional, or ontological view of the Torah that renders it as ineffective in certain purposes, obsolete in some respects, and inappropriate for some to observe. In the very least, the Torah no longer defines and delivers people in the messianic age, neither Jews nor Gentiles (Rom 3:19–20). Otherwise, the Messiah died for nothing (Gal 2:19)! Paul himself retooled Torah as a mixture of prophecy and wisdom (e.g., Rom 3:21; 4:22–24; 1 Cor 9:8–10),<sup>43</sup> retained Torah if reduced to the love command (Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:14), regarded certain parts of the Torah as intensified and other parts as relativized (e.g., Rom 13:8–10; 14:14),<sup>44</sup> even if he continued to personally observe it out of conviction or custom (Acts 21:26).

My point is that Paul’s allegedly pro-Torah and Torah-observant disposition is complicated by the difference between Torah and *halakhah*, by the complexities of conducting common meals between Jews and Gentiles, a mixture of strictness and leniency in negotiating pagan spaces, by Paul’s rhetoric that amplifies his socio-religious convictions about the Torah, and by Paul’s willingness to accommodate himself to others and to live “as a Gentile” or “as a Jew” (Gal 2:14; 1 Cor 9:19–23). Suffice to say, Paul as Torah-observant requires a great deal of qualification and will depend entirely upon whose perspective Paul’s pro-Torah credentials are approved by. For case in point, Paul’s remark that “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean” (Rom 14:14) could be treated as tantamount to renouncing Judaism by other Jews (see 4 Macc 4:26).<sup>45</sup>

Fourth, the identity of Paul’s Christ-believing Gentiles vis-à-vis Jewish covenant identity remains a point of earnest contention. PwJ proponents often

<sup>41</sup> Joshua Garroway, “Second Corinthians 3 ‘within Judaism’” in Ábel, *The Message of Paul*, 243–6.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Peter Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990); Karin H. Zetterholm, “The Questions of Assumptions: Torah Observance in the First Century,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 79–105.

<sup>43</sup> See Brian R. Rosner, *Paul and the Law*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013).

<sup>44</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 10.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. John M. G. Barclay, “Who Was Considered an Apostate in the Jewish Diaspora?” in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews: Beyond the New Perspective*, WUNT 275 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 141–55 (esp. 151–54).



seem acutely concerned to keep Paul's Gentile converts safely partitioned from laying claim to Jewish identity. No matter how much a Gentile might judaize, "In Paul's view," argues Fredriksen, "a gentile is a gentile is a gentile."<sup>46</sup> Thus, Paul's Gentile Christ-believers remain Gentiles and do not become Jews or participate in the currency of Jewish-ness however defined. This claim, in effect, ensures that Gentile Christ-believers are not considered "true Jews," and thus not given to the pernicious supersessionism that such an appropriation of Jewish identity potentially entails. Everyone remains in their ethnic-status quo (1 Cor 7:17–20) and in any case Jewish-ness is not transferable because there is a genealogical divide between Jews and the Gentiles that cannot be traversed even by messianic faith.<sup>47</sup>

While such a view might appear to obtain a certain utility, it is problematic on three fronts.

(1) The partitioning of Gentile-ness from Jewish-ness presumes that Paul endorses a social arrangement of Jews and Gentiles as equal in Christ but without compromising the distinctiveness of Jewish identity. I find that perplexing because treating Gentiles as "equal" yet "distinct" from Jews requires "equal" but "separate" in practice. Yet that is precisely what Paul vigorously protested in Gal 2:11–14 and arguably in Rom 15:1–13. Yes, there were different ways that Torah-observant Jews could negotiate pagan spaces and Gentile impurities, but Paul offers an *evangelical* basis for shared meals between Jews and Gentiles, the very truth of the gospel, which for him necessitated unity over purity, commensality without fear of condemnation (Gal 2:14).

(2) The PwJ positions downplay Paul's negation of difference and his simultaneous affirmation of the unity between Jews and Gentiles. To put it bluntly, the PwJ position requires negating Paul's negations. Whereas Paul said οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολή ("for there is no distinction") between Jews and Greeks in either condemnation or salvation (Rom 3:21–23; 10:12); οὐκ ἐν Ἰουδαίῳ οὐδὲ Ἑλλήνι ("one is neither a Jew nor a Greek") in Christ (Gal 3:28); and Gentile converts are former (ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε) Gentiles/pagans (1 Cor 12:2); the PwJ scheme seem to require Paul replacing the negation οὐ with the verb "to be" ἐστιν. Yet Paul assumes that all Christ-believers have a shared meta-identity in Christ that reaches across ethnic, gendered, and social divisions (Gal 3:28; cf. Col 2:11; Eph 2:11–3:13). Paul identifies Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers as "us," those "called," and part of God's "beloved" "people" and "children of the living God" (Rom

<sup>46</sup> Paula Fredriksen, "God Is Jewish, but Gentiles Don't Have To Be," in Ábel, *The Message of Paul*, 3–19, here 7 (esp. 5–13).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. J. Brian Tucker, *"Remain in Your Calling": Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011); Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); William Campbell, "Paul, Antisemitism, and Early Christian Identity," in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, eds. Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 318–31.

9:24–26). Jews and Gentiles belonging to the Messiah are members of a new covenant (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6). Paul even considers the “church of God” as distinct from Jews and Greeks (1 Cor 10:32), arguably some kind of “third race” (Aristides, *Apol.* 2.2; *Ep. Diogn.* 1.1; *Kerygma Petrou* frag. 2). While many PwJ proponents are allergic to that kind of language, others regard it rightfully as a necessary entailment of Paul’s ethno-religious discourse about his Christ-believing assemblies.<sup>48</sup> Jewish-ness and Gentile-ness are retained in some senses, but negated in other senses because of a new shared identity that is pneumatic and participationist. The PwJ view downplays the Pauline negation of a hierarchy of identities *coram deo* and Paul’s affirmation of a shared identity between them beyond the mere possession of faith. Part of the problem I suspect is that Paul does not have the category or vocabulary to precisely express the messiness of saying that Christ-believing Gentiles are not Gentiles but are Jewish Gentiles.<sup>49</sup>

(3) Paul disburses Jewish covenantal privileges to Gentiles. Note, Paul does not displace Jews as possessors of their inherited privileges (Rom 9:1–5), but he announces an eschatological distribution of them through faith in Christ in the new covenant. If Paul’s Christ-faith operated within Judaism, and if Paul himself does in a sense compel his Gentile converts to partially “judaize” by avoiding idolatry and sexual immorality, by adopting monotheism, and by crafting their own group-story around scriptural narratives of messianism and election, then it is near impossible to erect an ethno-religious palisade between Christ-identity and Jewish-identity. Both identities may not be co-terminus, but they must overlap in some sense and become hybridized. To tease that out, the markers of Jewish identity like circumcision are relativized in the sense of no longer representing the necessary condition of in-group identity (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 3:28; 5:6, 6:15) even while the cultic capital of circumcision is affirmed (Rom 3:1) and imputed to Gentiles to bolster their in-group identity (Rom 2:25–29; Phil 3:3).

Fifth, there is the challenging matter of Paul’s problem with Judaism which necessitated God’s revelation of his Messiah to Israel. Most of the RP advocates and even a few of the PwJ adherents contend that Israel’s Messiah opens a path of salvation for Gentiles, while the Jews remain “saved” within the aegis of God’s election of the nation and eschatological plan for Israel. Yet that runs roughshod over the evidence. Paul declares that the Messiah was a servant to Israel (Rom 15:8), sent to redeem those under the Torah from the curse of the

<sup>48</sup> See Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 178; idem, “Paul’s Jewishness,” in *Paul’s Jewish Matrix*, ed. Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011), 51–73, here 65–8; idem, *Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought*, 331–2; Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 51–7; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1443–9.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Joshua D. Garroway, *Paul’s Gentile-Jews: Neither Jews Nor Gentiles, But Both* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), esp. 45–69, who argues that baptized Gentiles become Jews.

Torah (Gal 3:13; 4:4–5), he affirms a mission to the circumcision (Gal 2:7–9), states that the gospel is for the Jew “first” (Rom 1:16), because “Jew and Gentiles alike are under the power of sin” (Rom 3:9), he implies his own gospel ministry to Jews with hope of their “conversion” (1 Cor 1:20–23; 9:20; 2 Cor 3:16), and states that empirical Israel can be re-grafted into God’s olive tree “if they do not continue in unbelief” (Rom 11:24). No matter how affronting it might be to modern pluralistic sensibilities, especially after the Catholic Church’s groundbreaking *Nostra Aetate* declaration, there was a Petrine and Pauline mission to Jews.<sup>50</sup> To this, Zetterholm complains how “traditionally oriented scholars” seem to have an “obsession that Jews and non-Jews *must* be saved the same way – through faith alone.”<sup>51</sup> To which I would respond that it is not a matter of obsession as much of literary comprehension, Paul says as much point blank (Rom 1:16; 3:30; 4:11–12; 10:9–13; 1 Cor 1:23).

We must ask though, why was it thought necessary to proclaim Jesus as Messiah and Lord to Jews? Why do Jews need Jesus as *their* Messiah? What can Jesus do for Jews that Moses, the Torah, and the covenant cannot? The answer to that question I believe is Paul’s anthropology and narrative of a world enthralled to “Sin” with “Sin” defined as an evil cosmic power.<sup>52</sup> The plight is more than Gentile idolatry, immorality, impurity, and ignorance. More than Jews needing to recognize that Messiah Jesus is God’s instrument of healing the Gentile world. In the words of Bruce Longenecker, there is a problem with humanity that even Israel’s Torah and covenant cannot fix.<sup>53</sup> One weakness of PwJ is its lack of attention to Paul’s anthropology. The remedy to this neglect does not entail a return to the Bultmannian paradigm of treating all of Pauline theology as merely an expression of his anthropology (μὴ γένοιτο). However, Paul’s anthropological pessimism implies that Jew and Gentile share in the adamic condition and Torah is not the solution. At best, the Torah was the scaffolding for a future salvific edifice; at worst, Torah was something used by Sin to keep humans enslaved to their evil desires. Jason Maston puts it well, “Paul’s pessimistic anthropology may be a secondary deduction drawn from his belief that God

<sup>50</sup> Brant Pitre (“Roman Catholic perspective Response to Zetterholm,” in *Perspectives on Paul*, ed. Scot McKnight and B.J. Oropeza [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020], 194–200, here 197) says, “As for the passage from 1 Corinthians [9:20–22], I am not sure that one could ask for a clearer and more explicit statement of the fact that Paul sees his mission as inclusive of Jews and Gentiles.” Though for Sanders (*Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought*, 110) it is impossible to imagine Paul zigzagging between kosher and non-kosher mission fields, so instead, 1 Cor 9:20–22 signifies “a description of his mental readiness to fit in with present company, whatever it might be.” On Paul’s Jewish “mission,” see Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 69–107.

<sup>51</sup> Zetterholm, “The Paul within Judaism Perspective,” 188 (italics original).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Matthew Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin: The Cosmic Tyrant in Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>53</sup> Bruce Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 120–1.

acted in Christ to save, but it becomes an important point in his claim against Torah observance as the means to divine blessing.”<sup>54</sup>

When it comes to Paul’s problem with Judaism, E. P. Sanders famously wrote: “In short, this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity.”<sup>55</sup> Riffing off that notion, Lloyd Gaston added: “This is what Paul finds wrong with other Jews: that they do not share his revelation in Damascus.”<sup>56</sup> Kathy Ehrensperger puts it similarly: “The main problem of Jews who do not share Paul’s view is that they cannot see the way for gentiles to attain righteousness apart from the law available to them in Christ.”<sup>57</sup> Mark Nanos has tried to turn the question on its head by stating: “This is what Paul would find wrong in Paulinism: it is not Judaism.”<sup>58</sup> My own suspicion is that what Paul finds wrong with Judaism, was first, in the sectarian sense, its anti-Gentile ethos which was inhibiting the revelation of the Messiah to the world; then second, in the anthropological sense, what the Torah could not do due its exacerbation of the sin-flesh nexus, God did by sending his Son in the likeness of a human being and by bestowing his Spirit as a foretaste of the new creation by making Jews and Gentile co-heirs of Abraham through the Messiah.<sup>59</sup>

Sixth, there is a need to revisit the matter of Paul and supersessionism. The PwJ collective are – quite understandably – on a crusade to critique and censure supersessionism readings and rhetoric, especially in scholarship. This often yields thoughtful critique and warning, but sometimes segues into animated denunciations of what many suppose Paul is plainly saying. According to N. T. Wright “the merest mention supersessionism sends shivers through the narrow and brittle spine of post-modern moralism.”<sup>60</sup> Scot McKnight concurs and reiterates the same point: “It has become sport to call the other options in Pauline scholarship a grand example of supersessionism” and “It is enough for some to gain the upper hand, like progressives and conservatives in some political battle, by all but damning the other with the S-word.”<sup>61</sup> I and others remain resolute in

<sup>54</sup> Jason Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul: A Comparative Study*, WUNT 2/297 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 171–2.

<sup>55</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552. Sanders amplifies this point later (*Paul: The Apostles’ Life, Letters, and Thought*, 681): “According to Paul’s argument in Rom. 10:1–4, *what is wrong with the Jews is that they are not Christian; what is wrong with Judaism is that it does not accept Christianity*” (italics original).

<sup>56</sup> Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 140.

<sup>57</sup> Ehrensperger, *Searching Paul*, 363.

<sup>58</sup> Nanos, “Paul and Judaism,” 159.

<sup>59</sup> Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 68.

<sup>60</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, COQG 4 (London: SPCK, 2014), 784; idem, *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978–2013* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 403.

<sup>61</sup> Scot McKnight, “Saints re-formed: The Extension and Expansion of *hagios* in Paul,” in *One God, One People, One Future: Essays in Honour of N. T. Wright*, ed. John A. Dunne and Eric Lewellen (London: SPCK, 2018), 211–231, here 211.

rejecting the notion that Paul viewed the church as a replacement of the Jews as the new Israel because it does not correspond to Paul's own pattern of thought. I remain equally committed to responsible readings of Paul in a post-Holocaust world where we must be mindful and vigilant of how scholarly discourse can shape inter-religious relationships.<sup>62</sup> That said, there are some important caveats that need to be mentioned here regarding Paul and supersessionism.

To begin with, supersessionism is not one thing but several different things, ranging from a replacement theology, all the way through to the belief that Jews need to abandon their rejection of Gentile inclusion in the covenant without Torah-observance.<sup>63</sup> I am all for critiquing supersessionism as long as protestors are clear as to which species of supersessionism they are talking about. In addition, Jewish groups used supersessionism discourse in their own claims and counter claims against each other. We see this among Jewish sectarian literature where authors demanded that they alone stood as the authentic representatives of Israel's sacred heritage, that they singularly possessed a mode of piety that pleased God, that they regarded themselves as the righteous ones of the messianic age, with vehement and vitriolic denunciations of rivals. Paul's own language about Jews and Christ-followers should not be identified as a contest between two separate religions but as part of intra-Jewish sectarian discourse. Daniel Harlow rightly observes:

Disagreement over who is elect was certainly part of intra-Jewish debate in the Second Temple period. This is clear enough from the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls. Paul, however went a step beyond the covenanters at Qumran: for them not all Jews are elect, but all the elect are still Jews. Not so for Paul: only those in Christ are in the covenant and among the elect. In his vision of a new humanity destined for a new creation, ethnicity – so essential to Jewish identity – disappears. If this theology implies no wholesale rejection or supersession of Israel, it does imply a new definition of 'Israel' and a displacement of historic Israel's covenantal self-understanding as a community formed by physical descent and ritual observance.<sup>64</sup>

There is also a kind of inevitable type of supersessionism between Judaism and Christianity just as there is between Judaism/Christianity and Islam, Christianity and Mormonism, or between Pharisaic Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism. The reality is that if salvation is of Christ and of Christ alone (somewhere, somehow, for someone) then alternative paths of salvation (somewhere, somehow, for someone) are rendered obsolete. Christianity has an inescapable supersessionist quality. As Joel Kaminsky and Mark Reasoner soberly note: "Any

<sup>62</sup> As I write this paragraph, American singer Kanye West (aka "Ye") made an anti-semitic outburst in a TV interview that associated the Jews with several conspiracy theories.

<sup>63</sup> See esp. Bruce Longenecker, "On Israel's God and God's Israel: Assessing Supersessionism in Paul," *JTS* 58 (2007): 26–44.

<sup>64</sup> Daniel C. Harlow, "Early Judaism and Early Christianity," in Collins and Harlow, *Early Judaism*, 391–419, here 405.

Christian reading of the Hebrew Scriptures is likely to involve some form of supersessionism, by which we mean that the early Christians came to believe that their reading of Israel's scriptures superseded other earlier and contemporary readings of these sacred texts by other Jewish readers and that God's acting through Jesus's death and resurrection had ushered in the beginning of the eschaton, thus opening a path for gentiles to participate in God's promises to Israel.<sup>65</sup> Now, among religious practitioners, what one does with the supersessionist substructure of Christian faith is a serious matter for theological ethics and inter-religious dialogue, but some type of supersessionism, even if far removed from a replacement theology, is intrinsic to Paul's thought. On combating supersessionism in religion, history, and culture, one might feel a kindredness of spirit with the PwJ project, but hold some reservations about the substance of their approach.<sup>66</sup>

To round out the discussion, in the preceding analysis I have tried to provide a *prima facie* appraisal of the advances and insights of PwJ even as I have pre-saged some of its potential weakness. The PwJ scholarly project has corrected the conversation in many respects, even if certain features remain contestable. Evidently, then, there are many points to explore, many debates to be had, and this volume explores many of those pressing questions.

### 3. The Contributions to this Volume<sup>67</sup>

Most of the contributions to this volume were delivered at Ridley College's virtual symposium on "Paul within Judaism" held 21–24 September 2021, during the height of the COVID pandemic, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Australian College of Theology.<sup>68</sup> Several of the presenters had their papers scheduled for other publication destinations, so other scholars were invited to contribute to the proceedings in their stead. The result is a truly international cohort of scholars writing on the topic Paul's relationship to and within Judaism.

Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr opens the volume with a comparison of the Pauline letters and the letter of James as texts that can be both safely located within Ju-

<sup>65</sup> Joel Kaminsky and Mark Reasoner, "The Meaning and Telos of Israel's Election: An Interfaith Response to N. T. Wright's Reading of Paul," *HTR* 112 (2019): 498–512, here 422 n.2.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Michael F. Bird, "Paul's Messianic Eschatology and Supersessionism," in *God's Israel and the Israel of God: Paul and Supersessionism*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Scot McKnight (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2023), 45–64.

<sup>67</sup> I am indebted to the many contributors for assistance with summarizing their contribution to the volume, trying to use their own words as much as possible.

<sup>68</sup> The oral presentations that the essays are based on can be found on playlist "Paul within Judaism" on the youtube page "Early Christian History with Michael Bird": [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IuC1TlcUxo&list=PL\\_4rhC0z\\_G8uDRpqzaZAI3I72GbBCGfc2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IuC1TlcUxo&list=PL_4rhC0z_G8uDRpqzaZAI3I72GbBCGfc2).

daism. In fact, Niebuhr wonders if Paul and James might even comprise an example of “mutual perception,” whereby they illuminate each other as texts which belong to Hellenistic Jewish literature of the common era. Paul and James are to be valued as two distinct Jewish voices that both speak about the salvific agency of God executed in Jesus Christ. Niebuhr compares Jas 1:13–18 and 2 Cor 4:1–6 as texts that share a common creational monotheism, an eschatological divine act wrought in Jesus, and a possibility of salvation by placing faith in God and Christ. In Jacobean language, salvation is a direct divine act by God’s efficacious word, that brings new birth, and makes them children of the Father of lights. Paul’s discourse in 2 Cor 4:1–6 also refers to God’s direct agency to enlighten the minds of believers to perceive and believe the gospel about the glory of Christ, a glory which is veiled by a darkness caused by the “god of this age,” but God can pierce through that darkness of unbelief. What is more, Niebuhr shows that both texts, with their cosmology and theology, fit comfortably into the world of Hellenistic Judaism as comparisons with Philo, *Life of Adam Eve*, and the Wisdom of Solomon demonstrate. For Niebuhr, James and Paul reflect a meta-level agreement on the divine agency of grace, particularly in the scriptural language about “light,” that is part and parcel of conceptions of divine agency in Hellenistic Judaism. Thus, James and Paul in their respective arguments about perceiving the Christ event, prove to be analogous with reflections in Hellenistic Jewish literary works about the agency of God towards his creation and towards humankind.

Jörg Frey addresses the apparent relativization of ethnicity and circumcision in Paul and his communities. Frey affirms the notion that Paul is to be located “within” Judaism and he explicitly identifies Paul as a Jew. In this sense, he is clearly aligned with PwJ practitioners. However, one aspect that Frey finds contestable is the proclivity of some PwJ exemplars such as Nanos and Fredriksen to insist that the ethnic difference between Israel and the nations are a fundamental and permanent chasm which remain in effect even in an eschatological state. Added to that are the premises that Paul himself remained Torah observant and his deflection of the normativity of certain aspects of Torah only applies to Gentile Christ-believers who themselves still “judaize” in some limited sense. In other words, what is contestable is the perspective Gentile Christ-believers do not in any sense become Jews or join Israel, they do however judaize, only not to the point of circumcision. The problem is that this requires (dis)regarding much of Paul’s own remarks about Torah as rhetorical word play (Rom 2:25–29; Gal 3:13; 1 Cor 9:19–23). According to Frey, the PwJ consortium do not properly grasp how Jewish ethnicity was something fluid, permeable, and transferable. In any case, Paul himself rarely uses ethnic terms to describe his congregations, preferring civic terms like “assembly” and “citizens” or cosmological language like “new creation.” Paul from his time in Antioch, argues Frey, Paul was deeply involved in fraternizing and fellowshiping with Gentiles in



shared meals which tells against a compartmentalization of Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers. Paul's remarks about circumcision relativize its ability to serve as a marker of Christ's people, whether Jewish or Gentile, a position deeply offensive to many Jews contemporary with Paul. Yet, Paul adopted such a position, not as an enlightened "universalist" but as a self-identifying Jew. According to Frey, Paul construed of Christ-believers as possessing an identity that was neither nested in nor transcending a Jewish ethnic identity, but was rather a participation in the eschatological community of God.

Josh Garroway tackles the topic of metaphors for ethnic transformation in Philo and Paul. Garroway begins by noting how it is now widely acknowledged that a Jewish concept of conversion emerged in the late Second Temple period but remained contested and negotiated for several centuries to come. One challenge for Jewish authors was to explain how Gentiles might reconfigure their pedigree so as to join Israel, a people to whom they did not naturally or historically belong. Garroway explores the related metaphors used by three first-century writers: Philo, Paul, and the author of Ephesians. The images they choose – the organism (*Virt.* 102–103), the olive tree (Rom 11:17–24), and the person (Eph 2:14–19) – describe the attachment of Gentiles to Israel in a way that complicates the transformation, dividing even as it unites, subordinating even as it incorporates, with the result that each author intimates, whether intentionally or not, that Gentiles remain Gentiles even as they cease to be so. The messy descriptions of Paul's charges seen throughout Paul's letters, it turns out, are part and parcel of first-century ethnic discourse about Israel and the Gentile admirers, adherents, and converts to its religious way of life.

Brian Rosner explores in his contribution the extent to which Paul upheld his Jewish identity as the apostle to the Gentiles? Rosner examines the Jewishness of Paul's identity, his fundamental beliefs, and his strategy in his Gentile mission. Rosner concludes that Paul the apostle *to* the Gentiles *from* Israel remained Jewish to the roots. Paul described his own identity in five ways: as apostle, servant, prophet, priest, and herald. Each of these types or vocations is explicitly derived from the Jewish Scriptures, and significantly for our purposes, and perhaps surprisingly, each one defines and gives impetus to Paul's Gentile mission. In prosecuting this mission among Gentiles, Paul does not abandon his Jewishness, but rather he reconfigures the fundamental beliefs and practices of Judaism, including election, Torah and Temple. Finally, Rosner argues that Paul's approach to dealing with Gentile believers in Jesus Christ is thoroughly Jewish and his agenda for them follows emphases and patterns evident in early Jewish moral teaching. Indeed, Paul's consistent strategy has striking affinities with Jewish moral teaching contemporary with Paul. This can be seen in examples from the *Sibylline Oracles* and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Paul undertook his Gentile mission in ways that are recognizably Jewish.



Chris Porter's contribution begins by observing that Paul's status as someone inside or outside of "Judaism" has become a much-contested interpretive rubric for modern exegetes. All too often the social categories that contribute to these heuristics are highly essentialised and treated in an exclusivist fashion. Accordingly, Porter attempts to revisit the complexity of this topic through the socio-cognitive lens of social identity theory. Porter, by treating some of Paul's self-descriptions in relation to Judaism, shows how ancient identity spaces yielded a complex set of overlapping identity concerns that can be juggled and leveraged for argumentative purpose, without abrogating an internally coherent identity. As such, Porter argues that Paul considered himself to be affirmatively and authentically Ἰουδαῖος. But this was only one part of his identity in a complex world. If pressed into a certain direction, such as Pharisaic zeal, Paul could also consider himself to be no longer Ἰουδαῖος, and yet still claimed heritage as a "Pharisee." Consequently, Paul's Ἰουδαῖος identity in the ancient world – like other socio-ethnic identities – resisted easy classification as it incorporated a vast range of sub-groups.

David Starling focuses on the relationship between the story of Israel and the identity of the Gentile-majority churches that Paul established and wrote letters to. The chapter begins with the benediction that Paul pronounced in Galatians 6:16, which Starling reads as referring to the community of Christ-believers as members of an "Israel of God" that has been restored and reconfigured around the Messiah, Jesus. Starling goes on, however, to highlight the questions that such a claim must have raised for Paul himself regarding the identity and future of the national/ethnic community to whom that language originally referred. The remainder of the chapter traces the thread of Paul's argument in Romans 9–11, where he wrestled at length with those questions. Gentiles, Starling argues, are viewed by Paul as having become inheritors of the promises from Hosea that he quotes in Rom 9:25–26 because of the correspondence between their own situation as "not my people" and the situation of the Israel addressed by the prophet. But this typological extension of the scope of the promises' fulfilment does not erase their original reference to national/ethnic Israel. The "all Israel" of Rom 11:26 is, therefore, to be viewed as an enlarged, eschatological community that embraces *both* the Gentiles who have been incorporated into God's people through faith in Jesus *and* the "natural branches" that have been grafted back into the same tree after having been cut off for a time because of unbelief.

J. Brian Tucker and Wally V. Cirafesi heed the call to account for both the particular socioreligious location and the theological texture of Paul's letters and those whom he recruited to join the early Christ-movement. Their response addresses three specific issues: (1) The way in which Jewish covenantal identity continues by deployment of the segmentary grammar of identity; (2) the socio-religious location of the Pauline Christ-movement within the institutional context of synagogue communities; and (3) the importance of the eschatological

pilgrimage tradition for maintaining distinct identities for Israel and the nations. In turn, they offer a discussion of the grammars of identity, first, since the presuppositions in regard to the nature of identity being formed are determinative for much of the readings given of Paul's letters, especially Romans. They then offer their understanding of ancient synagogues – particularly those organizationally akin to Greco-Roman associations – and of Paul's Christ-groups as part of such synagogue communities. Finally, in light of this socioreligious context, they argue that an approach that sees Paul's in-Christ gentiles as members of nations closely associated with Israel, who participate in the eschatological drama as a member of the nations, rather than as Israel – sometimes described as the commonwealth or prophetic approach – has the most going for it, both sociohistorically and exegetically.

Ryan Collman explores the available evidence as to what Jewish followers of Jesus thought about Paul's teaching on the Torah. After surveying the relevant data, Collman concludes that while Paul himself and the author of Acts portray him as being devoted to his ancestral laws, not much else can be confidently said about what other Jewish followers of Jesus thought about Paul's teaching on the Torah. While it is likely that a range of positions existed amongst ancient Jewish believers regarding Paul, our access to their attitudes toward Paul's treatment of the Torah are inaccessible. Collman then provides a revisionist overview of Paul's teaching on the Torah, arguing that Paul did not find any substantial problem with it. Rather, the key problem that pops up in Paul's discussion of the Torah is not the Torah itself, but the nature of the things that it seeks to order. This problem, however, is not solved by doing away with the Torah, but by the transformation that comes when humans are infused with the divine *pneuma*.

Kathy Ehrensperger examines how Paul tries to clarify for his addressees from the nations how the Christ-event impinges on their identity, in referring to them as seed of Abraham, that is, to Abraham as their ancestor. Ehrensperger argues that Paul places them on the map or into the lineage of Abraham, by arguing that through Christ a genealogical link has been established which institutes them as co-heirs to the promises. Genealogical narratives served a variety of purposes in cultures of antiquity. Evidently the inclusion into the lineage of an emperor via adoption aimed at controlling the succession to imperial power. On a collective level narrative maps of kinship relations were a widely shared means to structure and depict relationships between peoples near and far. Thus, Josephus knows of Jewish narratives which integrate Heracles into their family tree and thus claim a relation to Greek tradition. Christ-followers from the nations found themselves in a liminal space since their place of belonging, individually and collectively was unclear when considered in light of the maps of belonging prevalent at the time. Ehrensperger contends that Paul, via genealogical reasoning, tries to place Gentiles into the lineage of belonging to the God of Israel, not in place of but alongside the people Israel.

Janelle Peters examines the role of synagogues as formative socio-religious spheres for the Pauline churches. Peters notes how synagogue culture was very important to the Judaism of both Judea and the Diaspora. Synagogues were gathering places for communal matters and communal worship by Jewish/Judean inhabitants of a city. Synagogues featured furniture and paraphernalia that were non-cultic but symbolized cultic items in the temple. The synagogues had their own extra-temple system of worship shaped by Torah reading, prayers, hymnody, and had their own system for resolving halakhic and legal disputes. Accordingly, synagogue practices and precedents perhaps influenced the Pauline house churches in terms of ethos, structure, and regulation. By submitting himself to corporal punishment of thirty-nine lashes, Paul was in fact submitting to the discipline of synagogue leaders. Peters also points out that the ability of the Pauline churches to gather for meals and to take up a collection makes sense on the premise that they were a type of a synagogue since only Jewish synagogues had imperial permission to do such things. Paul too in 1 Corinthians 6 urges the believers not to solve legal disputes between members in a civic court, but to resolve the disputes among themselves internally as a self-sufficient and legally binding community, in other words, like a synagogue. The conclusion Peters reaches is that Paul's remarks about how to lead and regulate a house-church seems closer to the Jewish milieu of the synagogue, diverse though it was, than to Greco-Roman assemblies.

Ruben A. Bühner refers to sources from diaspora Judaism, where he shows the extent to which Jews in Second Temple Judaism found different and at the same time flexible ways to negotiate between typically Jewish customs, such as dietary restrictions, and the need to manage one's life as part of a mostly non-Jewish environment. By doing so, Bühner takes up some insights from the Paul within Judaism perspective and brings these insights in dialogue with more traditional exegesis of the Pauline letters. Thus, the flexibility of Paul's behavior described in 1 Cor 9:19–23 remained within the framework of what was accepted as "Jewish" at least by some Jews even before the Jesus movement. Paul does not "invent" a new way to live among non-Jews, but he gives a new christological basis for a long-established way of Jewish life.

Turning to the Book of Acts, Joshua Jipp contends that the Lukan Paul consistently affirms his faithfulness to the central tenets of his Jewish heritage, even though others accuse him of apostasy from Moses and betraying Jewish ancestral customs. Jipp in turn explores the Lukan Paul's Jewishness by means of delve into two central christological threads of Acts and their implications for Luke's depiction of the people of God, namely, the messianic and prophetic aspects of Lukan christology. Luke portrays Paul as a prophet of the resurrected and enthroned Messiah in order to explain Paul's task of calling both Israel and the nations to repentance as well as to establish a precedent that legitimates his rejection by most of his Jewish contemporaries. Viewed this way, the Lukan

Paul does not in any way reject God's election of Israel or engage in a replacing Judaism with Christianity. At the same time, argues Jipp, Luke also sees the significance of God's election of Israel as found Jesus the Messiah and where those who oppose Paul and reject his message find themselves excluded from their own covenantal blessings.

Murray Smith examines Paul's Christology in the Pauline speeches in Acts, asking the doubled-barrelled question, "How Jewish is the Lucan Paul's Christology?" and "How high is Paul's Christology in Acts?" Regarding the first question, Smith argues that Paul's Christology is both thoroughly Jewish, and historically novel. While all of the Lucan Paul's primary categories are drawn from the Scriptures of Israel, and many of his major affirmations find parallels in early Judaism, his specific Christological configurations are shaped by the history of Jesus of Nazareth and, especially, by his theophanic visions of Jesus on the road to Damascus and in the Jerusalem temple. Regarding second question, Smith contends that Paul, in Acts, proclaims Jesus not only as the crucified-and-risen Davidic Messiah, but as the one who embodies the very presence of Israel's God. Paul's accounts of his visions of Jesus are best characterized not merely as epiphanies, or Christophanies, but as Christo-theophanies – appearances of the risen Christ *as* God.

Lyn Kidson believes we can be in no doubt as to the impression the apostle Paul left in Asia Minor. Kidson maintains that when one examines the reception of Paul in many of the early Christian documents associated with Asia Minor from the first to the fourth century, Paul's distinctive Jewish identity seems to disappear. Accordingly, Kidson argues that the battle for a purely "Christian" identity in contrast to a "Jewish" identity led to a battle over the Pauline tradition in Christian churches in Asia Minor in the first three centuries, which was all but over by the fourth century. Following that hunch, Kidson proceeds to interrogate the Pastoral Epistles, the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, the *Acts of Paul*, and Amphilochus's *Against False Asceticism* for traces of this negotiation. Kidson suggests that the contest represented in these documents is a contest over Paul's tradition or how the Christian life was to be conducted. In this contest, opponents are labelled as "Jewish," and in this arena Paul's Jewish identity disappears. What becomes apparent is that Paul's nuanced arguments on the identity of gentile and Jewish believers "in Christ" and the resurrected flesh seem to become liabilities for later believers. Kidson contends that Paul's subtle negotiations, so evident in his letters, collapse in subsequent literature into the torrid contest over his memory and tradition in Asia Minor.

Michael Kok sets off to examine Jewish Christian Gospels and what they tell us about perceptions and receptions of Paul and Judaism. Kok begins by noting that according to the "Paul within Judaism" perspective, Paul did not require the non-Jewish members of his Christ associations to judaize by adopting the "works of the law." Such a perspective he alleges rightly challenges the percep-

tion that Paul himself was an antinomian figure, which is how many of the Jewish Christ-followers known as Ebionites or “poor ones” during the Patristic period perceived Paul to have been. Nevertheless, there is some limited evidence that there were some Jewish Christ-followers in the fourth-century, known to Epiphanius and Jerome as Nazoraeans, who could affirm Paul’s apostolic and Jewish vocation and maintain their own *Torah*-observant way of life. Kok proceeds, in turn, to offer a critical reconstruction of the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans from the heresiological reports about them and to examine their opinions about the “apostle to the Gentiles.”

# Agencies of Grace in Paul and James

## Two Jewish Voices

*Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr*

### 1. Introduction

In the following essay, I intend to broaden and to press ahead the debate on “Paul within Judaism”<sup>1</sup> by including in my survey a source contemporary to Paul that has its own history and place with respect to the “Paul within Judaism” debate. The letter of James has been considered to be “Jewish” by several modern authors<sup>2</sup> although it is exclusively preserved and transmitted as part of the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> In the letter prescript, the author builds his argument on his self-introduction as “slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Jas 1:1), and he reminds his “brothers and sisters” to preserve their common faith “in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” (2:1).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, this would not make him a “real Christian” for some modern exegetes, or his letter a “Christian” source, because most of the features typical of other “Christian” documents seem to be missing, particularly in comparison to Paul.<sup>5</sup> However, such an argument seems

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<sup>1</sup> See my review on the “The New Perspective on Paul” and on the “Paul within Judaism” debate: Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Einführung: Paulus im Judentum seiner Zeit: Der Heidenapostel aus Israel in neuer Sicht, in *Paulus im Judentum seiner Zeit: Gesammelte Studien*, WUNT 489 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 1–40, esp. 14–40.

<sup>2</sup> For references to the discussion on the “Sitz im Leben” of the letter see Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, ICC (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 32–50.

<sup>3</sup> For the reception history of James see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, Art. “Epistles, Catholic. I. New Testament,” EBR 7 (2013): 1086–92; idem, “Die Apostel und ihre Briefe: Zum hermeneutischen und ökumenischen Potential des Corpus Apostolicum im Neuen Testament,” in *Paulus und Petrus: Geschichte – Theologie – Rezeption*, ed. Heike Omerzu and Eckart David Schmidt (FS F. W. Horn), ABG 48 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 273–92; David R. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistle Collection and the Christian Canon* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> For a christological interpretation of the letter prescript see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “One God, One Lord in the Epistle of James,” in *Monotheism and Christology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Matthew V. Novenson, NovTSup 180 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 172–88.

<sup>5</sup> For the debate on Paul and James see Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2011), 259–63; Rainer Metzner, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, ThHK 14 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017), 163–6. I have developed my own view of the origin of the letter in Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “James,” in *The Reception of Jesus in the First Three Centuries, Vol. 1: From Paul to Josephus: Literary Receptions of Jesus in the First*

to suppose that we have at hand clear-cut distinctions between what is “still Jewish” or what is necessary to identify something as being “already Christian.” Yet, this distinction has turned out to be controversial in recent debates concerning the origins of the early Christian movement. Therefore, it is at issue to question the terms of “Judaism” and “Christianity” in principle as adequate for literary documents from the first or even for the first two centuries of the common era at least.<sup>6</sup>

I wonder whether the recent debate on the epistle of James, its place in the New Testament, and its relevance as part of the early Jesus movement<sup>7</sup> may shed some light on the “Paul within Judaism” debate as well. Perhaps, the debate on Paul may profit from realizing that the place of other NT writings with regard to ancient Jewish sources contemporary with them is at stake as well. By taking into account such debates, perhaps, the “Paul within Judaism” discussion may develop to a “Paul within the New Testament” discourse that proves to be fruitful for both ancient Jewish studies and NT scholarship.

The methodological approach I am going to apply here is borrowed from the Corpus Judaeo-Hellenisticum project that undertakes to study ancient Jewish texts and NT writings in mutual perception (“wechselseitige Wahrnehmung”).<sup>8</sup> By speaking of “wechselseitige Wahrnehmung” I want to indicate that the NT writings are to be acknowledged as part of Hellenistic-Jewish literature in a broader sense and can be used to complete our understanding of ancient Jewish

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*Century CE*, ed. H. K. Bond (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 259–75; a German version of parts of this article appeared as “Der erinnerte Jesus bei Jakobus: Ein Beitrag zur Einleitung in einen umstrittenen Brief,” in *Spurensuche zur Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (FS U. Schnelle), ed. Michael Labahn, FRLANT 271 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 307–29.

<sup>6</sup> See for the recent debate Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Tobias Nicklas, *Jews and Christians? Second Century “Christian” Perspectives on the “Parting of the Ways”* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Udo Schnelle, *Die getrennten Wege von Römern, Juden und Christen: Religionspolitik im 1. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> See for the place of the letter in the NT canon Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Exegese im kanonischen Zusammenhang: Überlegungen zur theologischen Relevanz der Gestalt des neutestamentlichen Kanons,” in *The Biblical Canons*, ed. Jean-Marie Auwers and Henk Jan de Jonge, BEThL 163 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 557–84; idem, “James in the Minds of the Recipients: A Letter from Jerusalem,” in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition*, ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 43–54.

<sup>8</sup> For two examples of the approach applied to passages in Romans see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Adam’s Sin and the Origin of Death: Paul’s Argument in Romans 5:12–14 in the Light of Jewish Texts from the Second Temple Period,” in *Studies in Philo in Honor of Gregory Sterling* (FS G. E. Sterling), ed. David T. Runia and Michael B. Cover, SPhiloA 32 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 205–25 (= in: Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Paulus im Judentum seiner Zeit. Gesammelte Studien*, WUNT 489 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022], 297–325); idem, “Das Neue Testament im Kontext jüdisch-hellenistischer Literatur: Röm 1,19–23 als Testfall,” in *Paulus im Judentum seiner Zeit: Gesammelte Studien*, WUNT 489 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 259–73.

religion and culture. Applied to Paul's letters and to the question of their relationship to the epistle of James, such an approach implies that both documents own a potential to broaden our horizon when we ask in which way Paul (and James as well) can be arranged within the plurality of expressions of "Jewish" practice and belief in the period of the Roman Empire.

Most Pauline scholars meanwhile accept the insight that the Judaism-Christianity divide has proved to be anachronistic with regard to the historical origins and the developments of Paul's mission to the Gentiles. This consensus applies to the terminology used and to the historical "realities" associated with the plurality of Jewish groups, including "Christ followers," who belong to this landscape. I hope that such a consensus will grow likewise in Jacobean studies. Both Paul and the letter of James (irrespective of the identification of its historical author)<sup>9</sup> should be listened to as two different voices that express beliefs and advocate religious attitudes and behaviors that are deeply rooted in the convictions of the people of Israel as testified in the Scriptures and in ancient Jewish sources.

Before I start my brief survey of texts, I want to clarify some of my assumptions with regard to the historical circumstances that Paul's letters and the epistle of James originated in and with regard to the theological convictions expressed by them. I assume that Paul and James wrote their letters independent of each other, although both certainly knew of each other as important figures of the earliest stages of the Jesus movement.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, both authors base their theological arguments on the conviction that Jesus is "the Lord," that means the eschatological representative of the God of Israel, who acted to fulfil God's will and to give new life to those who put their faith in him.<sup>11</sup> This implies that both belonged to the variegated and widespread religious movement that emerged from the impact of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. In addition, both authors build their theological arguments upon the Scriptures of Israel. They argue that in the Scriptures God had revealed his eschatological plans for his elect people. For both James and Paul, the salvation of Israel forms a constitutive part of their religious convictions. Yet, at the same time, both authors

<sup>9</sup> For my own view of the letter author see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Wer war 'Jakobus' in den Augen seiner Leser? Zu meinem Ansatz der Kommentierung des Jakobusbriefs im EKK," in *Who Was 'James'? Essays on the Letter's Authorship and Provenance*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker, Sigurvin Lárus Jónsson, and Susanne Luther, WUNT 485 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 161–78.

<sup>10</sup> For a similar view in recent research on James see Matthias Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief: Eine Studie zu seiner soteriologischen und ethischen Konzeption*, StUNT 22 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 241–8.

<sup>11</sup> For the understanding of faith in James see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Glaube im Stress-test: Πίστις im Jakobusbrief," in *Glaube. Das Verständnis des Glaubens im frühen Christentum und in seiner jüdischen und hellenistisch-römischen Umwelt*, ed. Jörg Frey, Benjamin Schließer, and Nadine Ueberschaer, WUNT 373 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 473–501.



base their arguments on their faith in Jesus Christ by developing quite different ways of reasoning to justify their convictions.<sup>12</sup>

The main difference between Paul and James pertains to the place of the Gentiles in the scheme of the eschatological events and the consequences resulting from that conviction for the religious behavior and beliefs of the communities which they address. For Paul, the inclusion of Gentiles into the community of believers without becoming Jews by undertaking circumcision forms an identity marker of his mission and his theological arguments.<sup>13</sup> This issue, however, seems to be ignored completely in the epistle of James. Therefore, the theological arguments in the letters of Paul and James, although sometimes sounding very close to each other, should be carefully distinguished.

In the following survey of texts, I argue that Paul and James are to be valued as two different “Jewish” voices that both speak about the salvific agency of God in Jesus Christ at the end of ages. Yet they express their voices through diverse arguments with different intentions towards different groups of addressees who belong to the variegated early Jesus movement. Both, in their own ways, represent “agencies of grace in Judaism.”

## 2. Two Epistolary Arguments on God’s Agency in Christ

I start my analysis by comparing two passages that usually do not play any role in the debate on Paul and James as related to each other. The argument in Jas 1:13–18, on the one hand, belongs to the “soteriological” basis of the letter.<sup>14</sup> What Paul renders in 2 Cor 4:1–6, on the other hand, is part of his argument to defend his claim to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, both arguments base upon a reference to God, the creator of the world, who has acted eschatologically by sending Jesus Christ, the Lord and savior, to save those who believe in him (God) by believing in him (Jesus Christ). This renders both texts appropriate for our search for “agencies of grace” in Paul and Judaism.

<sup>12</sup> It should be highlighted that Paul and James cannot be harmonized with each other in regard to their understanding of faith according to modern theological dogmatics. However, this does not mean that their particular views on faith and the arguments they use to substantiate them should be played off against each other. See for this Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Sünde im Jakobusbrief: Eine vernachlässigte Stimme zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments,” *KuD* 66 (2020): 290–311.

<sup>13</sup> In this regard I side with the proponents of the ‘Paul within Judaism’ approach, see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Heidenapostel aus Israel: Die jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen*, WUNT 62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 66–78; idem, “Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre in der gegenwärtigen exegetischen Diskussion,” in *Worum geht es in der Rechtfertigungslehre? Das biblische Fundament der “Gemeinsamen Erklärung” von katholischer Kirche und Lutherischem Weltbund*, QD 180 (Freiburg: Herder, 1999), 106–30 (= in *Paulus im Judentum seiner Zeit*, 235–56).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief*, 41–100.

## 2.1 *James 1:13–18*

### 2.1.1 *Structure*

James 1:13–18 is part of the letter's introduction ("epitome", 1:2–27) which overture several themes which will be discussed more thoroughly later in the letter.<sup>15</sup> The author here deploys several rather short theological reflections about the doubts and disturbances that afflict a believer's minds (vv. 5–8), the origins of good and evil desires (vv. 13–15), and about God's agency in the process of becoming and remaining a believer (vv. 16–18). In the following paragraph (1:19–27),<sup>16</sup> the author sketches three steps to delineate his basic theological insight that faith and practice belong together and must form a unity in the life of those who believe in Jesus Christ. The first step refers to the reception of the salutary word of God (vv. 19–21). The second step of the argument (vv. 22–25) highlights the unity of hearing and doing in the life of the believers that results from the gift of the word to them. By his third step of argument (vv. 26–27), the author encourages the readers to prove their true faith by developing fair and equitable social relations among each other.

It is apparent that the theological and ethical intentions of the letter are based on faith in God and Jesus Christ and direct the addressees to a practice and belief that focuses particularly on fair social relations. However, long before it comes to "faith and works" (cf. Jas 2:14–26), the thematic concern of the letter has been highlighted already by referring to the origin of faith in God's agency. The unity of hearing and doing, of receiving the word of God and displaying the faith received by disposing justice to each other, all derives from the faith bestowed upon the believers. At the soteriological core of his letter (1:13–25), the author does *not* speak of the relationship between faith and works. Instead, he stresses the good gifts of God from above (v. 17), the word of truth by which the believers are newly born as "firstfruits of his creation" (v. 18), and the process of receiving and listening to "the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (vv. 21–22). The author thus lays the soteriological basis for his later arguments that focus to a greater extent on ethical instructions.

### 2.1.2 *Interpretation*

In Jas 1:17, for the second time in the letter, God appears as a generous giver. Already in 1:5, the author had appealed to his readers: "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you." Now, in 1:17, he renders it like a mnemonic that "Every generous

<sup>15</sup> For the structure of the letter of James see Niebuhr, "Sünde im Jakobusbrief," 292–8. I judge 1:2–27 as "epitome" for the letter where the author determines his main intentions and mentions core elements or keywords of his argument that are developed further in 2:1–5:6, understood as "exposition."

<sup>16</sup> See for this Niebuhr, "Glaube im Stresstest," 475–7.

act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”<sup>17</sup> The terms *πάσα δόσις ἀγαθή* and *πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον* seem to be interchangeable. The pleonastic phrases *πάσα ... καὶ πᾶν* express rhetorical power. The addressees may expect from God anything imaginable good.<sup>18</sup>

For Philo, the qualities of “good” and “perfect” belong to a philosophically founded understanding of God.<sup>19</sup> When Philo reflects about the origins of good and evil, he maintains that God himself presents his gifts as benefactions and donations to human beings only. For God is good and generous by nature, but he punishes the sinners by the help of other divine powers.<sup>20</sup> The reason for this is that Philo in his philosophical understanding of God would not imagine that the divine comes in touch to anything “material.” However, in contrast to Philo and his philosophical backgrounds in Plato and Middle-Platonism, James does not focus on such philosophical reflections about the origins of good and evil.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, good and evil in James’ argument do not refer to God himself, but to God’s gifts to humankind. What James wants to highlight is God’s agency towards people, not his interior qualities.

Nevertheless, for the author of the letter of James, as well as for his audience, God is “above,” and is called the “father of lights.”<sup>22</sup> Such terminology points to conceptions of God in the Hellenistic-Roman era, consistent with biblical and early Jewish sources as well. The “lights” probably refer to the luminous heavenly bodies that belong to most ancient conceptions of nature. In the Greek Bible, however, the plural *φῶτα* refers to the stars and occurs only once in Ps

<sup>17</sup> For an identification of 1:17 as a hexameter see Allison, *James*, 270.

<sup>18</sup> For the metaphorical use of language in James to deploy his understanding of God, see Michael Glöckner, *Bildhafte Sprache im Jakobusbrief: Form, Inhalt und Erschließungspotential der metaphorischen Rede einer frühchristlichen Schrift*, ABIG 69 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2021), 81–104.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Philo, *Opif.* 8: Moses already recognized “that the activating cause is the absolutely pure and unadulterated intellect of the universe, superior to excellence and superior to knowledge and even superior to the good and the beautiful itself” (quoted from David T. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, PACS 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 48. Cf. also *Legat.* 5; *Praem.* 40. For an interpretation of Philo’s understanding of God see Stefan Wenger, *Der wesenhaft gute Kyrios: Eine exegetische Studie über das Gottesbild im Jakobusbrief*, AThANT 100 (Zürich: TVZ, 2011), 109–16.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Philo, *Fug.* 66: “For it is unbecoming to God to punish, seeing that He is the original and perfect Lawgiver: He punishes not by His own hands but by those of others who act as His ministers.” (Quoted from Colson/Whitaker, LCL Philo Vol. V, 47).

<sup>21</sup> For the philosophical backgrounds and contexts of Philo’s understanding of God in hellenistic Judaism see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Biblische Weisheit und griechische Philosophie in der frühjüdischen Literatur,” in idem, *Tora und Weisheit. Studien zur frühjüdischen Literatur*, WUNT 466 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 101–48, esp. 139–44.

<sup>22</sup> For the religious and philosophical backgrounds of this term see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Gott als ‘Vater der Lichter’ (Jak 1,17): Das Vaterprädikat im Jakobusbrief im Kontext von Platonismus und Frühjudentum,” in *Über Gott* (FS R. Feldmeier), ed. Jan Doehhorn, Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler, and Rainer Hirsch-Luipold (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 67–82.

135:7–9. The only parallel for the term πατήρ τῶν φῶτων in non-biblical Jewish texts comes from the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*. When Seth and his mother Eve in a vision watch two Ethiopians in heaven, these gloomy fellows prove to be sun and moon whose lights appear black in comparison to “the light of the universe, the father of lights.”<sup>23</sup> Even the angels in heaven venerate God as the “father of lights.”<sup>24</sup>

To call God “Father” is a common concept in Antiquity.<sup>25</sup> The Homeric phrase about Zeus as “father of Gods and human beings” is perceived in Platonism and Stoicism to reflect the relationship between the divine and the cosmos. In Hellenistic-Roman philosophical theology (as part of metaphysics) such a combination of reflections about God as father, the origins of the cosmos, the power of the divine over the cosmos and over human beings, formed an area of reflection that became fertile soil for early Jewish theological thinking as well. Certainly, the biblical restrictions for understanding God were delineated by the first commandment of the Decalogue which remained valid for every Jewish thinker to avoid any mythic connotations about a divine “procreation” of the cosmos. However, this prohibition did not prevent them from reflecting on the relationship between God and the creation by borrowing terms and conceptions from Greek philosophical traditions.

Thus, Philo polemicizes against those who admire the cosmos more than its creator and demands them to acknowledge and respect the divine powers of God, the creator and father of the universe:

There are some people who, having more admiration for the cosmos than for its maker, declared the former both ungenerated and eternal, while falsely and impurely attributing to God much idleness. What they should have done was the opposite, namely be astounded at God’s powers as Maker and Father, and not show more reverence for the cosmos than is its due. (*Opif.* 7)<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> LAE 36:1–3; for the understanding of God and his eschatological agency towards humankind in the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Hopes of Resurrection in Greek Texts of Early Judaism. Narrative Theology in the Greek ‘Life of Adam and Eve’ in Light of the Septuagint Translation of the Psalms, Sirach, and Job,” in forthcoming.

<sup>24</sup> LAE 35:1.

<sup>25</sup> For this concept in ancient Jewish and hellenistic-Roman traditions see Reinhard Feldmeier, “Der oberste Gott als Vater: Die frühjüdische und frühchristliche Rede vom göttlichen Vater im Kontext stoischer und platonischer Kosmos-Theologie,” in idem, *Der Höchste: Studien zur hellenistischen Religionsgeschichte und zum biblischen Gottesglauben*, WUNT 330 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 178–93; Christiane Zimmermann, *Die Namen des Vaters: Studien zu ausgewählten neutestamentlichen Gottesbezeichnungen vor ihrem frühjüdischen und paganen Sprachhorizont*, AGJU 69 (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Annette Böckler, *Gott als Vater im Alten Testament: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Entstehung und Entwicklung eines Gottesbildes* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000); Angelika Strotmann, “Mein Vater bist du!” (Sir 51,10): Zur Bedeutung der Vaterschaft Gottes in kanonischen und nichtkanonischen frühjüdischen Schriften, FTS 39 (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> Quoted from Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 48.

The Wisdom of Solomon appeals to God the “father” because in his providence God steers the course of a ship through the ocean and has given it a path in the sea and a safe passage through the waves.<sup>27</sup> Josephus summons his readers to recognize the “nature of God” and to imitate his works because he is “the Father and Lord of all.”<sup>28</sup> The most complete quotation of the Homeric phrase, together with God’s qualification as creator of the universe, occurs in Philo in his *De specialibus legibus* when he explains the Jewish understanding of God:

But if He exists Whom all Greeks and barbarians unanimously acknowledge, *the supreme Father of gods and men* and the Maker of the whole universe, whose nature is invisible and inscrutable not only by the eye, but by the mind, yet is a matter into which every student of astronomical science and other philosophy desires to make research and leaves nothing untried which would help him to discern it and do it service – then it was the duty of all men to cleave to Him and not introduce new gods staged as by machinery to receive the same honors. (*Spec.* 1.165)<sup>29</sup>

The author of James seems to be rather remote to such religious and philosophical reflections. Nevertheless, the term “father of lights” that he uses points to the cultural and ideological horizon under which he develops his own understanding of the agency of God who has acted to save those who put their faith in “God and Jesus Christ” (Jas 1:1).

In Jas 1:18, the term βουληθεῖς refers to God’s unchangeable goodness and his will to save his people as experienced by the believers.<sup>30</sup> The verbal form (Aorist) makes plain that here an action of God is in view, not an abstract attribute. It points to an event that has happened already and is received by the addressees as a saving act of God towards them. God is the one who had intended to bring the believers into new life by his “word of truth” and in fact has done so already. This act of “birthing” (ἀπεκύησεν) unites James and his audience (ἡμᾶς). Formulations in the first person plural are rather rare in Jas. They occur only here and in 2:1 in the first two chapters. According to the letter prescript, as well as in 2:1, the author and the addressees appear subordinated together to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The imagery of procreation and childbirth occurs twice in 1:15 and 1:18. By this terminology, the agency of God as father towards human beings, in this case, towards the believers, takes on a motherly aspect as well. The sequel of the argument shows that an act of creation is in view (κτίσματα). However, those

<sup>27</sup> Wis 14:3f. For the Wisdom of Solomon and its background in Jewish-Hellenistic traditions see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Die Sapientia Salomonis im Kontext hellenistisch-römischer Philosophie,” in *Sapientia Salomonis (Weisheit Salomos)*, ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, SAPERE 27 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 219–56.

<sup>28</sup> Josephus, *A.J.* 1.20.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from Colson/Whitaker, LCL Philo Vol. VII, 409.

<sup>30</sup> For my interpretation of Jas 1:13–18 see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Jakobus und Paulus über das Innere des Menschen und den Ursprung seiner ethischen Entscheidungen,” *NTS* 62 (2016): 1–30, esp. 6–11.

who are the recipients of God's agency as creator are members of the communities of believers in God and Jesus Christ. They are encouraged by the author to maintain their faith and to make it visible in their everyday life. Therefore, the process of creation here in view refers to the event of having become Christ followers, not to the creation of all humankind according to Gen 1–2.<sup>31</sup> If those human beings are “fathered” again and born once more, then they become something else, something new, more than what they had been before. In addition, by describing the act of becoming a Christ follower as a recurrence of birth, James highlights the passive attitude of the believers in view of their reception of the gift of faith. Of course, the author wants to encourage his addressees to an active way of life by pointing them to the needs of the poor and weak and by reproving them to avoid hostilities in the communities. However, the beginning of faith is a gift from God, an event of procreation and birth, where the infant as the neophyte is completely passive.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, if the author in Jas 1:18 speaks of God's will and his agency, he refers to the event of receiving faith in God and Jesus Christ. The “word of truth” therefore can be nothing else than the message and the means which have made the readers something new as they share the faith of the author. This message has its roots in the destiny of Jesus Christ, the risen crucified One. By accepting such a message as a gift from God, the addressees have been transformed as members of “the twelve tribes in the diaspora” into a community of Christ believers, a fellowship of sisters and brothers, who are on the way to eschatological salvation. Therefore, Jas 1:18 must refer to the salvific agency of God in Jesus Christ, even though the author does not precisely clarify the “procedure” of salvation by faith in Christ. In any case, an eschatological event is in view, although by using Aorist verbal forms, James identifies it as having happened already.<sup>33</sup>

## 2.2 2 Corinthians 4:1–6

### 2.2.1 Structure

The references to God the father of lights and creator of the believers in Jas 1:16–17 remind us of the argument put forward to describe Paul's ministry as an

<sup>31</sup> For an alternative interpretation, see Matt Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom*, NT.S 100 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 193–239. For a critical review of Jackson-McCabe see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “‘A New Perspective on James’? Neuere Forschungen zum Jakobusbrief,” *ThLZ* 129 (2004): 1019–44, esp. 1033f.

<sup>32</sup> See for my interpretation also Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Geschenkt,” *GPM* 62 (2008): 135–40.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion about the question of how to interpret a kind of “soteriology” in James see my interaction with Martin Bauspieß, “Ein Gesetz, das in die Freiheit führt? Überlegungen zum Existenzverständnis im Jakobusbrief,” in *Bestimmte Freiheit* (FS C. Landmesser), ed. Martin Bauspieß, Johannes U. Beck, and Friederike Portenhauser, ABIG 64 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2020), 183–203, in Niebuhr, “Sünde im Jakobusbrief,” 308–10.

apostle of Christ.<sup>34</sup> In 2 Cor 4:1–6, Paul combines the biblical tradition of the creation of light in Gen 1:3–5 with the present experience of the believers in Christ.<sup>35</sup> “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor 4:6)

The section functions as a summary of the foregoing argument since 2 Cor 2:14 prepares the way for its continuation until 7:4. The whole argument focuses on Paul and his call to apostleship (and perhaps on other apostles called to ministry like Paul).<sup>36</sup> It refers, thus, to Paul’s understanding of apostleship, not to the faith of every single member of the community. However, the event that Paul is pointing to is relevant for his audience as well because it forms the origin and the starting point of his ministry as an apostle that is the precondition of their faith in Christ. This becomes plain from the letter opening (1:1–2:13) where Paul intends to create a close relationship between his own experience of suffering and comfort by faith in Christ which he shares with his church in Corinth (cf. 2 Cor 1:6–7). Therefore, the particular experience of faith in his conversion that Paul is referring to in 4:6 must not be separated completely from the faith that determines the life of his addressees.

Thus, Paul interprets his own conversion by referring to God’s creation of light.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, he can attribute to his gospel the quality of proclaiming the divine light that shall enlighten everyone who share his experience of faith in Christ. In the section under consideration, Paul develops his argument by building up diametrical opposites. His proclamation does not consist of “shameful things that one hides,” but is an “open statement of the truth” (v. 2). The gospel that he proclaims is “veiled to those who are perishing,” but for the apostle it is “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (vv. 3–4). Still more important from a theological point of view, the experiences of those who are confronted with the gospel and their reactions are caused by different “divine agencies” opposed to each other. The unbelievers are under pressure from evil powers. “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers” (v. 4).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Robert Vorholt, *Der Dienst der Versöhnung: Studien zur Apostolatstheologie bei Paulus*, WMANT 118 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), 209–24; Thomas Schmeller, *Der Zweite Brief an die Korinther, Teilband 1: 2Kor 1,1–7,4*, EKK VIII/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, Ostfildern: Patmos-Verlag, 2010), 232–50.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Stefanie Lorenzen, *Das paulinische Eikon-Konzept: Semantische Analysen zur Sapientia Salomonis, zu Philo und den Paulusbriefen*, WUNT 2/250 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 231–6.

<sup>36</sup> For the argumentative context with regard to Pauline apostleship see Tobias Nicklas, “Die verborgene Herrlichkeit des Paulusdienstes: Überlegungen zu 2Kor 3,1–4,6,” in *Der zweite Korintherbrief: Literarische Gestalt – historische Situation – theologische Argumentation* (FS D.-A. Koch), FRLANT 250 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 240–56.

<sup>37</sup> For the background of Paul’s argument in the Scriptures of Israel, particularly in Gen 1:3 and Isa 9:1 LXX, see Florian Wilk, *Die Bedeutung des Jesajabuches für Paulus*, FRLANT 179 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 269–74.



In contrast, the creator God has enlightened the hearts of the believers “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (v. 6).

### 2.2.2 Interpretation

Paul in this section describes the moment of coming into touch with the gospel of Christ as a visual experience.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, we can assume that he refers to his visionary experience in the course of his own conversion.<sup>39</sup> An “apocalyptic” background of understanding is manifest with regard to two opposed transcendent powers involved in the proclamation of the gospel, “the god of this world” (v. 4) and the “true” God (v. 2). Therefore, those who had refused the Pauline gospel were not able to see “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God,” because their *minds* (νοήματα) have been blinded (v. 4). Thus, visual and noetic perceptions belong together. We find the same combination of seeing and understanding in v. 6 when Paul speaks about the illumination of *knowledge* (φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως) to perceive the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The term “image of God” attributed to Christ in v. 4 may refer to the creation of humankind according to which all humankind has been made “in God’s image and likeness” (κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν, Gen 1:26). However, in the context of 2 Cor 4:1–6, the visual experience points to the perception of God by receiving the image of Christ. Thus, in v. 6 Paul speaks of “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God *in the face of Jesus Christ* (ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ)”. Therefore, visual perception and reflective insight here refer to this particular “human being” called Jesus Christ, and not to every human being as created in the image of God. The Christological interpretation of the image of God in 2 Cor 4:6 is underlined by the term δόξα that pervades the whole argument (15 occurrences between 3:7 and 4:17). By calling his proclamation “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, v. 4), Paul creates an inseparable link between his ministry and his message. Both are “qualified” by divine glory. Becoming a believer for Paul means hearing the gospel message and experiencing the illumination of the heart by the divine glory that leads to the perception of Christ in his divine glory. Of course, as Paul hastens to add, Christ’s divine glory is the glory of the crucified Jesus. The followers of Christ, the apostles in particular, are “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies” (4:10).

<sup>38</sup> For the following interpretation see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Jesus Christus und der eine Gott Israels: Zum christologischen Gottesglauben in den Paulusbriefen,” *FuH* 34 (1995): 10–29 (= in idem, *Paulus im Judentum seiner Zeit*, 203–17).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), 113; idem, *One God one Lord – Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 119; Carey C. Newman, *Paul’s Glory Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric*, NTS 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 229–40.



The above-mentioned encounter of human beings with Jesus Christ as provoked by Paul's proclamation of the gospel can be either successful or not. Yet, in both cases, this does not depend on the agency of human beings but on the "divine agent" who possesses the power to preclude or to make such an encounter possible. If some of the recipients of Paul's gospel are called "unbelievers" (ἄπιστοι) or "those who are perishing" (ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις), it is because "the god of this world" has blinded their minds (ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων) and therefore the gospel has remained veiled for them. The same applies to Paul himself as the representative of believers. If he claims to having seen in his conversion "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ," it is because the true and merciful God (cf. ἡλεήθημεν, v. 1) has enlightened him (ἐλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν) to perceive "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Again (as in James), the events that Paul refers to are described by using Aorist forms to point to an action of God (ἐλαμψεν) and a passive experience of Paul (ἡλεήθημεν) that had happened in the past.

Several references to the Book of Wisdom and to Philo would make plain that such perceptions of the agency of God with regard to the experiences and the fate of human beings in "soteriological" terms are common in early Jewish theological reflection as well. Thus, to give only a few examples from each of the sources mentioned, according to the Book of Wisdom, God and the devil had been acting towards human beings, with the result that "we," although created immortal and according to his eternal image (ἐπ' ἀφθαρσίᾳ καὶ εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ἀδιότητος), fell under the power of death by the deception of the devil.

Because God created human beings for incorruption, and made them the image of his own, but through envy of the devil death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it. (Wis 2:23–24)<sup>40</sup>

Immortality here appears as a divine gift given to human beings that they had gambled away because they succumbed to the deception of the devil. However, for the righteous, there is still hope, because:

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God ... They are at peace ... In the time of their visitation they will shine out, and as sparks through the stubble, they will run about. They will judge nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will be king over them forever. Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will remain with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his chosen ones. (Wis 3:1–9)

Compared to Paul's argument in 2 Cor 4:1–6, similarities as well as differences become plain. Both texts attribute to God the power of giving eternal life to human beings. Both reflect about a transcendent power of evil that puts at risk

<sup>40</sup> Translations of Wisdom of Solomon are quoted from NETS. For textual problems and annotations see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr (ed.), *Sapientia Salomonis (Weisheit Salomos)*, SAPERE 27 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 114.

this divine gift, although according to both authors in the end the salvific power of God will overcome the power of the evil. That is, both authors emphasize the agency of God with regard to the reception of salvation. However, in the Book of Wisdom eternal life is an experience of the soul only of the dead who are in God's hands already in the present, but also as a promise for the future to the righteous who currently suffer. According to Paul, believers have received the light of salvation as a gift from God already in their earthly life. Such an experience of faith has changed their hearts to recognize the glory of God in the face of Christ. Therefore, they experience already in their hearts the glory of the risen Christ, but have to carry the death of Jesus in their bodies. Nevertheless, they certainly hope that the life of Jesus Christ will also become visible in them.

For Philo, in his treatise *De opificio mundi* (*Opif.* 26–35), the creation of light is part of the first creation account according to Gen 1:3–4, and is the point of departure for his concept of a double creation. God first created the immaterial world of ideas (as reported in Gen 1), and only afterwards (according to Gen 2) he created the material world.<sup>41</sup> The phrase “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1) for Philo means beyond of any course of time, and helps him to distinguish between the timeless world of incorporeal ideas and the material world arranged by time and space (cf. *Opif.* 26–28). The opposition between light and darkness as mentioned in Gen 1:5 is the biblical source to emphasize that the intelligible light surpasses the visible as the sun surpasses darkness. Philo then continues his argument by discussing the relationship between the invisible-intelligible and sense-perceptible worlds:

That invisible and intelligible light has come into being as image of the divine Logos which communicated its genesis. It is a star that transcends the heavenly realm, source of the visible stars and you would not be off the mark to call it “allbrightness.” From it the sun and moon and other planets and fixed stars draw the illumination that is fitting for them in accordance with the capacity they each have. But that unmixed and pure gleam has its brightness dimmed when it begins to undergo a change from the intelligible to the sense-perceptible, for none of the objects in the sense-perceptible realm is absolutely pure. (*Opif.* 31)<sup>42</sup>

Once again, we notice distinctions as well as affinities to Paul's argument in 2 Cor 4:1–6. Both authors use phrases from Genesis to explain their understandings of the agency of God towards creation and towards human beings. For both, the reflection of the present conditions of the world as they experience it leads them to develop a kind of dynamic in the process of how this world came into being and what sort of fate it will acquire. Both authors attach to the biblical account a second, transcendent power opposed to the creator God, as happens another way in the Book of Wisdom. For Philo, this second power origi-

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Opif.* 29. For a thorough interpretation of the passage see Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses*, 163–73.

<sup>42</sup> Quotations of *Opif.* are from Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses*.

nated only when the pure intelligible world of ideas mixed with the sense-perceptible world of material things. This abstract, philosophical concept of evil corresponds to the “god of this world” in Paul or to the devil in the book of Wisdom by being dangerous for the creation as God intended it to be. Even though both NT authors do not develop this notion of an anti-creation force further, the philosophical background is connected with such an interpretation of the Genesis texts in Philo.<sup>43</sup>

However, according to Philo, God “separated light and darkness (and) placed boundaries in the extended space between them” in order to “ensure that they would not continually interact and be in strife with each other, and that war would not gain the upper hand over peace and bring about disorder in the cosmos.”<sup>44</sup> Therefore, to hold this world in existence and to keep humanity alive, people should respect the boundaries between the two worlds and should orient their way of life according to the eternal law of nature that corresponds to the Mosaic Law. This is quite different to Paul’s understanding of what happens when God is interacting with human beings. Nevertheless, it is another possible and theologically viable way of understanding God’s agency in ancient Jewish belief as based on the testimony in the Scriptures of Israel about God’s dealing with humankind.

### 3. Comparison and Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I attempt to sum up some of the results of my surveys of two passages from James and Paul. At the outset, I hasten to emphasize once again that my argument does not imply any literary or tradition historical relationship between the texts analyzed here. Likewise, I do not intend to evaluate the theological positions of James and Paul according to any dogmatic or historical measures. If I try to compare Jas 1:13–18 and 2 Cor 4:1–6 under the aspect of agencies of grace as expressed in these texts, it is to search two different ways of reasoning independently of each other about the question of how God acts in the Christ event. I assume that both Paul and James ground their theological reflections in their own experience of faith in Jesus Christ and that both authors intend to make an impact by their theological arguments to the practice and the beliefs of their respective audiences. However, I do not intend to argue in favor of a typically “Christian” understanding of “agencies of grace” as represented by Paul and/or James, nor do I imply that Paul and James in their theological

<sup>43</sup> For an analogous constellation of Paul and James on the one hand and contemporary Jewish and non-Jewish writings on the other with regard to the reception of hellenistic-Roman philosophical elements see Niebuhr, “Jakobus und Paulus über das Innere des Menschen,” 13–30.

<sup>44</sup> *Opif.* 33.

reflections refer to each other in whatever direction. What connects them is a sort of meta-level agreement. It consists in their rootedness in common religious beliefs. On the one hand, they share some of the convictions of the early "Jesus movement." For both authors, Jesus is the Lord. God and Jesus Christ form a union in the view of the believers. Those who believe in God and Jesus Christ will receive eschatological salvation and completion in future.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, both authors agree by approving fundamental beliefs about God that are founded in the testimony of the Scriptures of Israel as expressed in a great number of early Jewish writings of their time, beginning with the Septuagint.

In the two passages analyzed, Paul as well as James refer to God, the creator of the universe, when they attempt to explain the process by which human beings have come to believe in Jesus Christ. The motif of the creation of light as part of the biblical account of creation (Gen 1:3–5) occurs in both passages, although in variable interpretations and with different meta-thoughts. For James, the phrase "father of lights" is just an allusion to the biblical account of creation. His primary focus is on God who acts as father and as mother likewise to "create" the believers in Christ as "firstfruits" of a new creation by granting to them his "word of truth." The believers that James addresses shall remember the good gifts that they have received from God to become newly born creatures. They shall trust in the power of these gifts that will save their souls (cf. 1:21; 5:20).

For Paul in 2 Cor 4:1–6, the references to the biblical creation account are more thoroughly reflected and developed. He quotes verbatim several phrases from the biblical account. By using a term that refers to every human creature in the creation account of the Genesis, he identifies the Lord Jesus Christ as the eschatological "image of God." The motif of light taken from the creation account in Paul applies to the process of receiving and gathering the gospel. Enlightened by God the believers are led to recognize Jesus as the eschatological representative of God. The visual aspects included in Paul's reference to his conversion thus take on the character of understanding and knowledge. Thus, perception, recognition and reflection are parts of the process of becoming a Christ believer.

Both James and Paul in their arguments about perceiving the Christ event prove to be cognate with reflections in Hellenistic-Jewish literary works on the agency of God towards his creation and towards humankind. Again, this does not mean that they depend on each other on a literary or tradition level. Passages from Philo or the Book of Wisdom examined in our survey discuss different matters and use discrete motifs different to Paul and James in their epistolary arguments. Of course, both Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon are by no means related to Jesus Christ and to the question of how to become a Christ-believer.

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<sup>45</sup> For such a "binitarian" view of God in James see Niebuhr, "One God, One Lord in the Epistle of James," 173–5, 186–8.

However, in their own ways of thinking and believing they do reflect the problem of how it happens that the God of Israel, the divine power as perceived in the Scriptures, can be effective in the world created and can be perceived by human beings in their everyday life. Disregarding their explicit references to Jesus Christ, therefore, Paul and James would figure quite suitably among other Jewish thinkers who reflect on the agency of God towards humankind.

What marks out the reflections of both Paul and James about how to become a Christ believer are the eschatological prospects they develop in their arguments. However, even this eschatological perspective does not lead them beyond the "boundaries of Jewish thinking" (if there ever have been such). In the Book of Wisdom, the eschatological perspective is determined by the fate of the ungodly and the righteous. Those who trust in God in the face of their sufferings during their earthly life "will shine forth in the time of their visitation" (Wis 3:7), whereas the godless "shall be as though they had never been" (2:2) and their "allotted time is the passing of a shadow" (2:5). In Philo, such eschatological perspectives are rare if present at all. However, such "eschatological hesitation" in Philo follows from his philosophical perspective towards the universe as consisting of the invisible realm of ideas and the material, sense-perceptible world that is structured by time and space. For Philo, completion of the universe is a process of purification of the world of ideas from any "material" components, not the least by discarding every "ethical" impurity. Nevertheless, if James and Paul direct their views towards the eschatological completion of the creation by God and towards the salvation of those who believe in Christ, this does not make them "un-Jewish." Rather, their particular way of dealing with the problem of future expectations result from their faith that is rooted in the biblical promises about God's agency towards his people and shaped by referring to Jesus Christ as the foundation of their eschatological salvation.

Thus, James and Paul agree about the agency of God who enables and brings forth eschatological salvation for human beings who direct their faith in Jesus Christ. For both authors, God is the subject of the events that transform human beings into followers of Jesus Christ by faith. For both, such faith is a gift of God, not a "work" of the believers. In the understanding of both James and Paul, believing is a passive attitude that orients the minds and the whole lives of the believers to the agency of God, an attitude of passivity and receptiveness. However, both early "Christian" authors also agree that such a faith has to become visible in the attitude and in the performance of deeds by the believers towards their neighbors in their needs, to the weak and the poor in particular.

# The Relativization of Ethnicity and Circumcision in Paul and His Communities

Jörg Frey

## 1. Paul the Jew and the “Paul Within Judaism” Perspective

The Apostle to the gentiles was a Jew, from his birth to his death.<sup>1</sup> There cannot be any reasonable doubt about this. This is stated by his own testimonies in his undisputed letters,<sup>2</sup> and is also confirmed by the narrative of Acts.<sup>3</sup> Whereas some of his Jewish contemporaries might have considered him an unlawful person, ignoring or even deliberately destroying the boundaries of the Jewish people,<sup>4</sup> his faithful solidarity was with his kinspeople until his last journey to Jerusalem. And while some voices in Christian and Jewish scholarship, particularly in continuation of the history-of-religions school, considered him a renegade or apostate,<sup>5</sup> or even a “mythmaker” and the inventor of “Christianity,”<sup>6</sup> these voices have become increasingly silent in recent years. The sources,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jörg Frey, “The Jewishness of Paul,” in *Paul: Life, Setting, Work, Letters*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer, trans. Helen S. Heron with revisions by Dieter T. Roth (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 57–95, here 57–60; idem, “Paul’s Jewish Identity,” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World. Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt*, ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stefanie Gripenrog, AJEC 71 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 285–321. See the thorough investigation by Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Heidenapostel aus Israel. Die jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen*, WUNT 62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), and also Markus Tiwald, *Hebräer von Hebräern: Paulus auf dem Hintergrund frühjüdischer Argumentation und biblischer Interpretation*, HBS 52 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom 9:3, 5; 11:1; Gal 2:15; 2 Cor 11:22, and also the more extensive accounts in Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:5–6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:4–5.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rom 3:31; Acts 21:21, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Thus, in more recent scholarship Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, trans. O. C. Dean (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), 33; Wolfgang Schrage, *Der 1. Brief an die Korinther*, Bd. 2, 1 Kor 6,12–11,16, EKK 7,2 (Zürich: Benziger and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1995), 340; and Georg Strecker, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. E. Boring (New York: de Gruyter, 2000), 21, who infers from Gal 1:13–24 and Phil 3:3–11 that Paul’s “self-understanding included a fundamental break with Judaism.” Even N. T. Wright can state with 1 Cor 9:19–23 in view: “Being a ‘Jew’ was no longer Paul’s basic identity” (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God* [New York: SPCK, 2013], 1436).

<sup>6</sup> Thus the Jewish historian Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) who describes Paul as a gentile convert who introduced concepts of Hellenistic religion and thus “created” Christianity (cf. however, the critical review by Ellis Rvkin, “Paul’s Jewish Odyssey,” *Judaism* 38 [1989]: 225–234), and also

instead, confirm how densely Paul draws on his Jewish heritage, on the Scriptures, Jewish categories, methods of interpretation, and traditions<sup>7</sup> even when promoting the new faith in the Messiah Jesus as being in accord with the Law and the Prophets, and with the eschatological will of God. The christological predications adopted and developed by Paul (e.g., Christ, *Kyrios*, Son of God) are also thoroughly based on and justified from Jewish traditions.<sup>8</sup> Paul is and remains a Jew even as an apostle, promoting faith in Jesus, and founding new communities of his followers. Most scholarly attempts at distancing Paul from Judaism are shaped from anachronistic theological categories, from the view of later periods, from the later separation of Judaism and Christianity, and from anti-Jewish theological traditions from Marcion via Luther, Schleiermacher, and Harnack to Bultmann. It is one of the most important developments of recent Pauline scholarship, that these scholarly traditions have been criticized and corrected, in particular by the so-called “New Perspective on Paul,” and that the discovery of Jewish sources, in particular from the Qumran corpus, has helped to recognize that Paul’s place is “within Judaism.” The question that remains is: “Where in Judaism” was he located? Or what does “Paul’s Judaism” look like?<sup>9</sup>

While this seems to be widely accepted in current Pauline research, the pendulum has swung the other direction. After the “new perspective,” there came a “newer” or “radical” perspective,<sup>10</sup> with John Gager’s attempt at – and the title is meaningful – “Reinventing Paul,”<sup>11</sup> within the framework of a disentangling

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Gerd Lüdemann (after his “farewell” to Christianity) in *Paul: The Founder of Christianity* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jörg Frey, “Die religiöse Prägung: Weisheit, Apokalyptik, Schriftauslegung,” in *Paulus Handbuch*, ed. Friedrich W. Horn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 59–66.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the more extensive discussion in Jörg Frey, “Eine neue religionsgeschichtliche Perspektive: Larry W. Hurtados *Lord Jesus Christ* und die Herausbildung der frühen Christologie,” in *Reflections on Early Christian History and Religion – Erwägungen zur frühchristlichen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Jörg Frey, *AJEC* 81 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 117–168. On the Jewish roots of even “high” christological titles, see most recently Ruben A. Bühner, *Höhe Messianologie: Übermenschliche Aspekte eschatologischer Heilsgestalten im Frühjudentum*, *WUNT* 2/523 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020); see also idem, *Messianic High Christology. New Testament Variants of Second Temple Judaism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Thus the well-phrased change of the question in Mark D. Nanos, “Paul and Judaism. Why Not Paul’s Judaism?” in *Reading Paul Within Judaism, Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos 1*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2017), 3–59.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, “Eine neuere Paulusperspektive,” in *Biographie und Persönlichkeit des Paulus*, ed. Eve-Marie M. Becker and Peter Pilhofer, *WUNT* 187 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 46–64; Pamela Eisenbaum, “Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism,” *BibInt* 13 (2005): 224–38; Margnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul. A Student’s Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 127–163 (“Beyond the New Perspective”). On the history of the “Paul within Judaism”-perspective, see Mark D. Nanos, “Paul – Why Bother?: A Jewish Perspective,” *STK* 95 (2019): 271–87.

<sup>11</sup> John Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Cf. also earlier



construct of two neatly separated covenants.<sup>12</sup> From those ideas, the new “*Paul Within Judaism*” school could develop. Its beginnings are usually linked with the name-giving session at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2010.<sup>13</sup> Speaking of a “school” or a group does not mean, however, that the scholars involved hold the same views in every respect. There are manifold differences, nevertheless a commonality can be seen in the fact that for the scholars of the “Paul-within” perspective, the “New Perspective” did not go far enough, especially when still looking for something Paul wanted to criticize aspects of contemporary Judaism, e.g. its ethnocentrism.<sup>14</sup> “Paul-within” scholars, therefore are no longer solely concerned with understanding and locating the apostle within pluriform contemporary Judaism, they do not merely see Paul as a Jew, but more precisely as an observant Jew. Furthermore, some scholars such as Mark Nanos and Paula Fredriksen<sup>15</sup> programmatically attempt to deny the relevance of Paul’s statements on the Jewish law for contemporary (and later) Judaism. Of course, any kind of interpretation of relevant religious texts, including our understanding of Paul, is connected to our broader “political” perspective and interests,<sup>16</sup> but it seems to me, that the “political” effect or even the “political” aim of the views mentioned is to delegitimize any further “Christian” critique of Judaism, if based on Paul. This goes beyond historical scholarship and is sometimes connected with high moral claims, which

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Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews and Gentiles* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Gager argues in his book that Paul’s criticism of the Jewish law does not refer to it as the law of Israel, but only to its validity for gentile Jesus followers. While they can participate in God’s covenant without obligation to the law, the validity of the law for Jewish followers is by no means restricted. Accordingly, as Gaston and Stowers had previously formulated, for Paul there were two covenants, one through the Torah for the Jews and one through faith in Christ for the gentiles. The consequence is that according to this view, Paul did not see Jesus as the Messiah of Israel or Messiah for the Jews. With such a position, the Jewish-Christian dialogue can be defused, but it is difficult to reconcile the “two covenant theory” with Paul’s self-testimonies, e.g., in Rom 9–11 (cf. the criticism in Wedderburn, “Paulusperspektive,” 53–64). For Gager, it ultimately remains open whether Paul still saw himself as a Jew and to what extent he himself observed the Torah (see Gager, *Reinventing*, 147).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Mark D. Nanos, “Introduction,” in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1–29, here 11.

<sup>14</sup> Thus Nanos, “Introduction,” 6–7, with regard to the views of J. D. G. Dunn.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. also a number of scholars from a Christian background, especially in the Scandinavian school, such as Magnus and Karin Zetterholm (Lund), or Anders Runesson (Oslo).

<sup>16</sup> Nanos is well aware of this, but for the “Paul-within” school, he claims that the contributors of his volume “are committed to the science of historiography more than they are beholden to making Paul fit either into what they wish for him to say, or what he has been understood to have said in the service of the various theological positions that have prevailed” (cf. Nanos, “Introduction,” 4). Yet, in such a claim there is always the danger of claiming more objectivity for one’s own views and describing the others as biased. It would be hermeneutically naïve not to see the circle in which we all are more or less involved.



is understandable in view of the conflictual and bloody history of Jewish-Christian relations. But the views presented with such moral impetus must also be measured against the texts and in hermeneutical self-awareness.

An initial, decisive presupposition of this “school” is that all of the Pauline letters are addressed only to non-Jewish readers and, therefore, do not address or even criticize the lifestyle and Torah practice of synagogal Jews. It is rightly seen that, for Paul, believers in Christ were the fulfilment of the Jewish expectation of an eschatological influx of peoples to worship the God of Israel (cf. Rom 15:16) and that Paul sees himself as an eschatological agent in that process with – as I have expressed elsewhere – even “high-priestly” functions.<sup>17</sup> It is further stressed that Paul himself, as a Jew, fully observed the Law.

However, according to the “Paul-Within” school, the ethnic difference between Israel and the nations is considered a fundamental and permanent distance which is also considered to remain eschatologically. Even if it is Paul’s aim to draw others close to Judaism or bring them to a “Judaizing” lifestyle, he does not want to make them Jews.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, it is said, Paul forbade circumcision and entry into Judaism for Christ-believing non-Jews. Whereas those gentile Christ-believers are expected to follow a Torah oriented, in some way “Judaizing” lifestyle, that is, to worship the God of Israel exclusively and to live according to the ethical norms of the Torah, they are never expected to become Jews. For all Jews, instead, the validity and binding force of the Torah remains unrestricted, even if they decide to follow Jesus.

According to Nanos, Paul’s message is directed exclusively at non-Jews who were at the same time closely linked with the synagogue, but as separate “sub-groups,” they did not mix with Jewish Jesus followers in a common congregation.<sup>19</sup> Paul’s “critique of the law,” thus only concerns the validity of the Torah for non-Jews, but does not imply (and does not allow) a critique of Judaism and its Torah observance in general. In this perspective, “ethnicity” is considered

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jörg Frey, “Das Selbstverständnis des Paulus als Apostel,” in *Receptions of Paul in Early Christianity. The Person of Paul and his Writings through the Eyes of his Early Interpreters*, ed. Jens Schröter, Simon Buttica, and Andreas Dettwiler, BZNW 234 (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter 2018), 115–42, here 138–40.

<sup>18</sup> Mark D. Nanos, “Paul’s Non-Jews Do Not Become ‘Jews.’ But Do They Become ‘Jewish’?: Reading Romans 2:25–29 with in Judaism, alongside Josephus,” in *Reading Paul Within Judaism, Collective Essays of Mark D. Nanos 1* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 127–54. On the fundamental function of ethnicity, see also Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 32–7, and 73–7 where she speaks of Gentile Christ followers as “ex-pagan pagans,” in order to point out that the ethnic identity is not changed.

<sup>19</sup> Mark D. Nanos, “Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 283–304, here 284, speaks of “subgroups” of believers in Jesus within the larger context of the synagogues. See also more recently idem, “Paul’s Polemic in Philippians 3 as Jewish-Subgroup Vilification of Local Non-Jewish Cultic and Philosophical Alternatives,” in *Reading Corinthians and Philippians Within Judaism, Collected Essays of Mark Nanos 4* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 142–91, here 146.

the basic category: The ethnic separation between Jews and non-Jews which is considered even eschatologically permanent, such that the boundary between Jews and non-Jews could not be touched or should not be touched.

In my view, there are still open historical questions with regard to the addressees of Paul's message which cannot be further discussed in this paper: For example, is the interlocutor in Romans 2 merely a rhetorical phantom? Is the "us" in Gal 3:13 ("Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law") really a mere *prosopopoiia* with which Paul places himself in the gentile addressees, or does he associate himself with his addressees and include himself in those freed from the law? Does 1 Cor 9:19–23 ("becoming all things to all people") only point to Paul's rhetorical adaptability,<sup>20</sup> or does this statement also express an astonishing liberty of the Jew Paul with regard to his own behavior, including the form and degree of his own observance of halachic rules? And does this apply to himself alone as a Jewish follower of Jesus or not also to his co-workers in his communities some of whom were Jews like himself? Would not his commitment to the table fellowship of Jews and gentiles which he reports with regard to Peter in Antioch (Gal 2) demand of Jewish Jesus followers in daily practice a considerable tolerance or willingness to compromise in matters of purity and food *halakah*? In my view, these demands which were not accepted by everyone, might be the reason Paul tragically failed in the end with his ideal of table fellowship in his communities. All these questions would deserve a more thorough discussion which cannot be done in this paper. Here, I will focus, instead, on one of the most fundamental points of the "Paul within" school, the aspect of "ethnicity." Did ethnicity matter in antiquity, or, more precisely, for Paul and his contemporaries?<sup>21</sup> Or: To what extent was it decisive or even inchangeable? How far could it be negotiated or relativized? And how can we understand a few generations later sources speak about a new ethnic identity of Christ followers, a "new" or "third race" (Diogn. 1:1; KerPetr frg. 5), alongside Jews and pagans? Is this still a late effect of the processes and developments in Paul's time?

<sup>20</sup> Thus, Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy 'to Become Everything to Everyone' (1 Corinthians 9:19–23)," in *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism*, 52–92; and idem, "Was Paul a 'Liar' for the Gospel? The Case for a New Interpretation of Paul's 'Becoming Everything to Everyone' in 1 Corinthians 9:19–13," in idem, *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism*, 93–108.

<sup>21</sup> Cf., most recently, the argument by the Jewish scholar Erich Gruen in his new book Erich S. Gruen, *Ethnicity in the Ancient World: Did it Matter?* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020) where he answers the question from the title rather negatively, cf. *ibid.*, 218: "[The ancients'] sense of collective identity rested primarily on common customs, traditions, moral principles, and manner of life, rather than on birthright and blood-line. In the final analysis, the establishment of a distinctive ethnicity did not much matter." See also the volume by David G. Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020).

## 2. Paul and Ethnicity

Advocates of the “Paul-Within-Judaism” perspective emphasize the importance of the distinction between Jews and non-Jews for Paul. Herein Paul represents a characteristically Jewish classification of the world. Any general idea of “universality” is a modern entry and anachronistic to Paul. However, it must be critically examined whether and how this distinction is also eschatologically transformed in ancient Jewish concepts, including Paul. And first and foremost, there is need to discuss the character of this “ethnic” distinction. What is “ethnicity”? Is ethnic identity fixed and unchangeable, or is it – as many other aspects of identity – malleable and negotiable? How are ethnicity and religion linked? And how did Paul use ethnic reasoning? Did he value “ethnicity” as such,<sup>22</sup> and what is the identity Paul wants to shape, strengthen, and defend?

With the focus on (Jewish) ethnicity, the Paul within Judaism school rightly points to one of the problems of the so-called “New Perspective on Paul,” as their main proponents have explained Paul mostly in the “universal/ethnic dichotomy.”<sup>23</sup> According to James D. G. Dunn, Paul argues against the particularistic use of Jewish boundary markers in the communities of Christ followers, in favor of a more universalistic view with regard to the participation of gentile believers. Thus, while rightly questioning traditional anti-Jewish readings and distorted views (e.g., about Jewish legalism or self-justification), the New Perspective on Paul has actually adopted or continued other tendentially anti-Jewish or even “colonial” clichés according to which universalism supersedes Jewish particularism.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast, scholars emphasizing Paul’s Jewish identity have demonstrated how Paul’s perspective is fundamentally shaped by Jewish ethnic categories,<sup>25</sup> such as the basic distinction between Jews and gentiles<sup>26</sup> or Jews and Greeks.<sup>27</sup> Only once, does Paul use the Greek distinction of Greeks and Barbarians (Rom

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Charles H. Cosgrove, “Did Paul Value Ethnicity?” *CBQ* 68 (2006): 268–90.

<sup>23</sup> Thus Caroline J. Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8; see also Simon Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity between Discourse and Social Practices: Two Examples in Tension,” *EC* 8 (2017): 309–35, here 310.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. also Denise K. Buell, *Why This New Race?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); also Denise K. Buell and Caroline J. Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 235–51. The cliché goes back to enlightenment theology, e.g., Johann Salomo Semler, and is forcefully presented in the works of Ferdinand Christian Baur and Adolf von Harnack who could plainly say that Paul “delivered Christianity from Judaism” (Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* trans. T. B. Saunders [New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons and London: Williams & Norgate, 1901], 190).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Jörg Frey, “Die religiöse Prägung: Weisheit, Apokalyptik, Schriftauslegung”; idem, “Paul’s Jewish Identity.”

<sup>26</sup> Rom 3:29; 9:24; Gal 2:15.

<sup>27</sup> Rom 1:16; 2:9–10; 1 Cor 1:22–25.

1:14), explained as “the wise and the foolish,” but, then, immediately returns to the Jewish pattern with the phrase “first to the Jew, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). So, there can be no doubt that “Paul is keenly aware of ethnic matters,”<sup>28</sup> of “what we today call ‘ethnicity.’”<sup>29</sup> These aspects belong to his basic experience as a Jew in the Cilician diaspora, and ethnic concerns were also in the background of his activities in persecuting the group of Jesus followers (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6) where he probably saw the boundaries of Judaism endangered. And if there were indeed mixed communities, Paul would have to negotiate not only religious but also ethnic diversity on a regular basis. In any case, Paul was concerned with Jewish ethno-religious concepts, or “ethnocentrism.” Instead, “gentile” is, strictly speaking, not an ethnic category, as those gentiles would see themselves as Galatians, Pisidians, Egyptians, or Romans.

So, what is “ethnicity”? We cannot discuss the problems of definition here, but can only consider a few aspects.<sup>30</sup> Modern sociological thought has made us aware of the fact that ethnicity has to be understood “within the framework of discursive constructions of identity, rather than in terms of genetic origins. Ethnicity is a matter of culture and not of nature.”<sup>31</sup> Although many people in antiquity (as even today) might take an “essentialist” stance towards various aspects of (ethnic, but also social, gender, or sexual) identity, we can hardly ignore the sociological insight that “ethnic identity is socially constructed and subjectively perceived,”<sup>32</sup> it is “a cultural construct, perpetually renewed and renegotiated through discourse and social praxis.”<sup>33</sup> Ethnic discourse is, therefore, “a form of rhetoric that is deployed to mark boundaries between and among groups of people,”<sup>34</sup> with the negotiated views “oscillating between poles of fixity and fluidity.”<sup>35</sup> Hutchington and Smith list six criteria that – in

<sup>28</sup> Thus Samuel Vollenweider, “Are Christians a New ‘People’?: Detecting Ethnicity and Cultural Friction in Paul’s Letters and Early Christianity,” *EC* 8 (2017): 293–308, here 306.

<sup>29</sup> Vollenweider, “Christians,” 293.

<sup>30</sup> For further discussion, see John Hutchington and Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Sian Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1997). Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2008); Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), see also the discussion in Christopher D. Stanley, “The Ethnic Context of Paul’s Letters,” in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, Texts and Editions for New Testament Study 10 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 177–201, here 178–82, and Caroline J. Hodge, “Paul and Ethnicity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*, ed. Matthew V. Novenson and R. Barry Matlock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Vollenweider, “Christians,” 300.

<sup>32</sup> Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 19 (emphasis original).

<sup>33</sup> Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 19, see in general 17–33.

<sup>34</sup> Cavan W. Concannon, “When You Were Gentiles”: *Spectres of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul’s Corinthian Correspondence*, Synkrisis: Comparative Approaches to Early Christianity in Greco-Roman Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 16.

<sup>35</sup> Concannon, *Gentiles*, 17; see Vollenweider, “Christians,” 293.

varying degrees – constitute ethnicity: “(1) a collective name (an ethnonym); (2) a foundational myth; (3) a shared history; (4) a distinctive culture (including religion, customs or language); (5) a common territorial origin, and (6) a ‘sense of solidarity.’”<sup>36</sup> All these aspects are part of the process of rhetorically negotiating ethnic identity and their implications on one’s self-understanding or position in society.

In ancient Hellenistic culture such ethnic negotiations were omnipresent.<sup>37</sup> All ethnic groups in the Hellenistic Roman world,<sup>38</sup> including Jews,<sup>39</sup> were necessarily involved in such reasonings. For Ptolemaic Egypt, for example, Sylvie Honigman speaks of a “nested ethnicity”:<sup>40</sup> “The overarching category of *Hellenes* was extended to encompass all immigrants, including Thracians, Judeans, and other groups” if they participated in Greek language, literacy, and culture. Many of them adopted Greek names or also dynastic names. So, even native Egyptians and, of course, also Jews could “make their way into the privileged category of the Greeks” and, quite practically, enjoy fiscal privileges. That all these groups did not share the same cultic rites was not an obstacle for inclusion in this category.<sup>41</sup>

Of course, there were also essentialist positions, probably among all groups in the Greco-Roman world. Numerous “ancient Romans and Egyptians did not see ethnicity in these historically fluid terms,”<sup>42</sup> although within their world, negotiation about ethnic identity and related privileges practically happened everywhere, if born Egyptians strived for the privilege of being considered *Hellenes* and if people from all parts of the Roman empire took their chances to get the privilege of citizenship.

<sup>36</sup> Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 6–7, quoted from Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 313.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Cf., for example, Patrick J. Geary, “Barbarians and Ethnicity,” in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 107–29 or Rachel Mairs, “Intersecting Identities in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt,” in *Egypt: Ancient Histories, Modern Archaeologies*, ed. Rachael J. Dann and Karen Exell (New York: Cambria Press, 2013), 163–92.

<sup>39</sup> See John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury Academic, 1996); John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); for a case study in Hellenistic-Roman Egypt, see Sylvie Honigman, “The Ptolemaic and Roman Definitions of Social Categories and the Evolution of Judean Communal Identity in Egypt,” in *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Yair Furstenberg, AJEC 94 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 25–74.

<sup>40</sup> Honigman, “Ptolemaic,” 49.

<sup>41</sup> Honigman, “Ptolemaic,” 49; cf. also Dorothy Thompson, “Hellenistic Hellenes: The Case of Ptolemaic Egypt,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. Irad Malkin (Cambridge, MA, and London: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2001), 301–22.

<sup>42</sup> Cosgrove, “Did Paul Value Ethnicity?,” 269.

Strongly essentialist views were also present in Second Temple Judaism, most obviously in priestly circles: A priest can only be such by priestly descent and cannot become a priest by choice or by learning. According to the priestly-shaped worldview of the Qumran *yahad*, it is divine predestination that decides the fate of all humans,<sup>43</sup> so that a real “conversion” or the change of one’s religious status by learning is impossible. However, other Jewish groups such as the Pharisees embraced the possibility of learning, and in diaspora Judaism Jews were aware of the possibility of conversion with the effect of a real change of religious or ethnic status, at least in theory. According to the later rabbis, a proselyte “was equal in all respects to the native-born Israelite”<sup>44</sup> although not all of the rabbis “were entirely convinced [...] of the equality between the convert and the native.”<sup>45</sup> But it is obvious that most Jews, especially in the diaspora, considered a change of ethnicity possible. Again, the idea of a “nested ethnicity” might be helpful, as those proselytes would of course keep some aspects of their earlier ethnic identity as Egyptians, Syrians, or Romans. But the historical evidence does not support the idea that for Paul, as a diaspora Jew with Pharisaic learning, the ethnic boundaries were so fixed and impenetrable that he might feel it necessary to prohibit gentiles from becoming Jews or that this idea would stand in the background of Paul’s warning to this Galatian addressees.

The permeability of ethnic boundaries is also evident in the 2nd century, where Christians appear more and more in the internal as well as the external perspective as a third group alongside Jews and pagans, as a new *ethnos* that is not characterized by origin from a particular earthly country, but by belonging to a symbolic realm. Such a new identity as a “new” (Diogn. 1:1) or “third *genos*” (KerPetr frg. 5; Tert. *Nat.* 1:8) alongside Jews and Greeks is protreptically advocated in the Epistle to Diognetus.<sup>46</sup> The new “*genos*” is rooted in the cultic difference, the new worship, and also the new teaching (Diogn. 2:1; 5:3), but ethnic categories are mixed with civic and political categories, so that “ethnicity is but one formative pattern among others in the construction of Christian identity, complemented by other metaphorical clusters that appear more central to Christian self-definition.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cf., basically, the Treatise of the Two Spirits 1QS III, 13–IV, 26, but numerous other texts from the Hodayot, the Damascus Document, and other writings. See, for overview Armin Lange, “Wisdom and Predestination in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *DSD* 2:3 (1995): 340–54.

<sup>44</sup> Shaye J.D. Cohen, “The Rabbi in Second-Century Jewish Society,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3: *The Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, William D. Davies, John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 922–90, here 944.

<sup>45</sup> Cohen, “Rabbi,” 944.

<sup>46</sup> On this, see Vollenweider, “Christians,” 294–7.

<sup>47</sup> Vollenweider, “Christians,” 297.

### 3. Ethnicity in Paul's Communities

From these second century developments, we can go back to Paul! Are these developments, including an "ethnic" description of the new identity in Christ already laid out in Paul? And how is the identity shaped by Paul in his letters related to the ethnic identity and praxis of Jews. How does he address aspects of ethnicity in his letters? And to what extent does it matter?<sup>48</sup> Let us start with a few unsystematic observations:

Of course, Paul speaks of himself as a Jew or an Israelite, and he expresses solidarity with his kinspeople, Israel, according to the flesh (Rom 9:1–5). He also enumerates all the merits of his Hebrew, more precisely, Benjaminite origins, his Pharisaic learning, and his exemplary Jewish way of life, albeit in the mode of the past, and it is unclear how much of this way of life he has retained as an apostle. He clearly states that he no longer values these advantages "in Christ" as advantages, but even (what may be a rhetorical exaggeration) as loss or rubbish (Phil 3:8). This shows that as an apostle, Paul regards his former ethnocentric perspective, his "boasting" in his exemplary Jewish existence, as severely relativized.

Paul also values a salvation-historical priority of "the Jews" (Rom 1:16, etc.), but he also considers their advantages with regard to their present soteriological status strongly relativized (Rom 2:25–29). In certain passages, we can see a perspective of Jewish ethnocentrism in the background of his verdicts: The gentiles are sinners (Gal 2:15; cf. also Rom 1:18–32; 1 Cor 5:1; 1 Thess 4:5). However, compared with Philo or with many other ancient authors, Paul does not use ethnic or ethnographic stereotypes. For instance, the term "barbarians" is used very rarely (Rom 1:14; 1 Cor 14:11). Only the author of the Pastorals, then, lets Paul utter the quote, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" (Tit 1:12).

With regard to his addressees, Paul rarely uses ethnic categories, but rather mentions their location according to cities and Roman provinces.<sup>49</sup> It is even unclear whether his insult "O you mindless *Galatai*" (Gal 3:1) actually addresses ethnic "Galatai" or rather people of the province Galatia, who were actually Pisidians or Lykaonians etc. The gentile and sinful past of his addressees is often mentioned.<sup>50</sup> But "gentile" as a category is not at the same level as "Jew". From a Jewish perspective, "gentile" is "a counterpart to 'Jews,' but not ... an ethnicity or nationality comparable to 'Jews,' 'Greeks,' 'Romans,' 'Skythians,' 'Ethiopians,' and so on."<sup>51</sup> Sometimes, Paul uses "Greeks" also in the sense of

<sup>48</sup> On this, see the article by Cosgrove, "Did Paul Value Ethnicity?"

<sup>49</sup> Apart from Gal 3:1, he only uses "Macedonians" in a probably ethnic sense 2 Cor 9:4 (cf. Stanley, "Ethnic Context," 186).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 6:11; 12:2 etc.

<sup>51</sup> Cosgrove, "Did Paul Value Ethnicity?," 272.



“gentiles,”<sup>52</sup> that is, from his Jewish perspective. But being “from the gentiles” seems not to be of central importance for the identity Paul wants to address and shape. Thus, in the openings of his letters, he instead uses other terms, ἐκκλησία (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1) which is a neutral, non-ethnic, and non-cultic term, or other designations that refer to God’s calling or saving act, such as οἱ κλητοί, those who are called (Rom 1:6), ἅγιοι, those who are holy (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1), or, ἡγιασμένοι, who are sanctified (1 Cor 1:2). Thus, in spite of Paul’s thoroughly Jewish perspective, he does not address his communities in openly ethnic or cultic terms. He seems to avoid particularly Jewish terms and likewise all kinds of terms linked with paganism or pagan cults. Instead, he uses “neutral” terms from the world of political assemblies, terms that point to the divine activity in Christ, and, at least one, when speaking of the heavenly πολίτευμα (Phil 3:20), the notion of a very different, namely “heavenly” citizenship or “ethnic” affiliation.

### 3.1 Does Paul Not Speak to Jews?

But is this new identity an identity apart from Judaism? Does it only include gentiles or former pagans who now venerate the one God through Jesus. Is the Pauline ἐκκλησία void of Jews? Or is the view suggested by the Paul-within-Judaism school in itself anachronistically shaped by the later separation between synagogal Judaism and the emerging church?

Historically, it is in my view more than plausible that, after his life-changing vision of Christ, Paul first narrated his experience and also preached his new insights in the Jewish communities where he used to be hosted, possibly somewhere in the Nabatean area, and also in Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:17, 21). When he was later called to work within the community of Christ-followers in Antioch, he found there a community of Jews<sup>53</sup> who were open to gentiles in their eschatological mission but did not circumcise them for whatever reason,<sup>54</sup> probably

<sup>52</sup> Christopher D. Stanley, “‘Neither Jew nor Greek’: Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society,” *JNTS* 64 (1996): 101–14, here 105, thinks that Paul uses “Greek” in an ethnic sense, but this is implausible in view of 1 Cor 1:22–24, where it is used in parallel with “peoples” (cf. also Rom 3:9). In the singular use in Rom 1:16 it simply means an exemplary non-Jew, possibly even in Rome. Cf. rightly, Cosgrove, “Did Paul Value Ethnicity?,” 272 f.

<sup>53</sup> If these Jews were actually immigrants from Jerusalem, the followers of Stephen who had involuntarily emigrated from Jerusalem, they might have formed “a special group in Antioch from the very beginning, which in fact existed on the fringes of the local Jewry. Such a marginal existence certainly made it easier to open up to sympathetic non-Jews, but at the same time it made integration into the local Jewish association, which also had communal rights, impossible” (Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Geschichte des Urchristentums* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013], 197).

<sup>54</sup> On the profile of the Antiochene community of Jesus followers, see in particular Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus und Antiochien. Die unbekannten Jahre des Apostels. Mit einem Beitrag von Ernst Axel Knauf*, WUNT 108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 300–12. Cf. also Jörg Frey, “Paulus als Pharisäer und Antiochener:



more practical than strictly theological.<sup>55</sup> They also practiced table fellowship between Jewish and gentile Christ followers. Paul entered that mission, contributed to it, and later continued to act accordingly, even after the split from the Antioch community. It is important to see that he did not invent that kind of mission. Others did so, before him, even if it was Paul who reflected its consequences most thoroughly.

Admittedly, these historical considerations are partly based on Acts. But what can we say from the authentic testimonies of Paul? Were there Jews in “his” communities? Did he speak to Jews?

It cannot be denied, in my view, that Paul is not the only Jew in these communities. Some other fellow Jews are even mentioned by name, including Apollos who is a Jewish Jesus follower (Acts 18:24) and Prisca and Aquila. According to Acts 18:2, Prisca and Aquila were a Jewish couple who, along with other Jews, were expelled from Rome. Later, they worked together with Paul in Corinth and hosted an ἐκκλησία in their house (Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19). Paul also calls Andronicus and Junia, another couple, probably in Rome, his kinspeople (συγγενεῖς), that is fellow Jews (Rom 16:7). And if the Crispus mentioned in 1 Cor 1:14 was indeed a synagogal leader, as Acts 18:8 claims, he would be another example of an individual of Jewish origin who worked together with Paul in his missionary work and probably shared his missionary strategy and attitude. Should we really assume that all these Jews, as also Paul himself, did not mix with the gentile believers, nor have table fellowship with them? This would be an absurd notion. But if they in fact mixed in some manner – perhaps with the gentiles adapting to Jewish sensitivities as far as possible<sup>56</sup> – how does this affect the reading of Paul’s letters? Can we really assume that only one part of the congregation, the sub-group of the gentiles, listened to the reading of the text, and the others did not attend? But if they were also present in the reading of the letters, could they really think that Paul’s argument with regard to the Law concerned only the Pagans and their relationship with the Jewish Law, but not the Jews? Didn’t Paul at least have to reckon with the fact that Jews (or Jew-

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Biographische Grundlagen seiner Schriftrezeption,” in *Paulinische Schriftrezeption. Grundlagen – Ausprägungen – Wirkungen – Wertungen*, ed. Florian Wilk and Markus Öhler, FR-LANT 268 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 81–112, also in idem, *Von Jesus zur neutestamentlichen Theologie: Kleine Schriften II*, ed. Benjamin Schliesser, WUNT 368 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 301–34.

<sup>55</sup> Initially, believers from the gentiles could be regarded in analogy with God-fearers who associated themselves with Judaism within the framework of the diaspora synagogue. When these gentiles were baptized, however, they were, through this act of initiation, participants in the messianic salvation, just like the Jesus followers from Israel, so that it could be a natural consequence not to insist on an additional circumcision. Cf. Friedrich W. Horn, “Der Verzicht auf die Beschneidung im frühen Christentum,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 479–505.

<sup>56</sup> This is what Nanos presupposes in his historical reconstruction. However, within the New Testament this would correspond the rules of the apostolic decree in Acts 15:28–29, but not to the claims of Paul himself (cf. Gal 2:3, 9–10).

ish Jesus followers) were also listening? And if so, would he not have considered that his reasonings also affect those Jewish attendees and listeners?

Even if the composition of the congregations addressed by Paul cannot always be assured, there are in any case *some* Jews within and around these ἐκκλησίαι, and it is inconceivable that they would have separated themselves from the gentiles without Paul protesting as he did in the Antiochian incident (Gal 2:11–14). We will have a look at this interesting paradigm, because the most obvious example of a Jew keeping table fellowship with gentile believers, is Peter.

Of course, the incident mentioned by Paul in Gal 2<sup>57</sup> is told from later memory and with a particular argumentative intention. Paul recalls the incident “because he recognizes there a [...] precedent for the Galatian crisis.”<sup>58</sup> He narrates it from his memory and creates a framework for his address to Peter (Gal 2:15–21). What actually happened can be left aside here, and it is irrelevant whether or not Paul actually spoke these words to the historical Peter. If the argument was to be effective, the narrative and the reported speech had to be plausible for the Galatian addressees.<sup>59</sup> I want to make two important points:

First, there is the clear memory that Peter, as a Jewish follower of Jesus (and also Barnabas, another Jewish believer who became a leader in the community of Antioch) had practiced table fellowship with the gentile community members over a certain period of time, without separating for reasons of purity and food laws. In Antioch, at least, a large city with probably many different Jewish synagogues, one such “mixed” community had developed, and was initiated, tolerated, or even presided over by Jewish followers of Jesus who were apparently open to accepting gentiles in their assembly and at their table without imposing on them the Jewish dietary laws. This is historically conceivable, and it is also conceivable that other Jews disliked this and intervened.

Second, there is the memorized address of Paul to Peter, who is explicitly addressed as a Jew. Here, Paul clearly adopts a Jewish ethnocentric commonplace: “We are Jews by birth and not sinners from the gentiles” (Gal 2:15). The “we” includes himself and his fellow Jew, Simon Peter. Thus, here Paul explicitly speaks to a fellow Jew about the “truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:14). Of course, Paul did not evangelize Peter, nor could he really teach him, but he makes clear that in his view, the “truth of the gospel” is also valid for his fellow Jew Peter, and, thus, also for the attitude of other Christ-following Jews towards the gentiles. We do

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 316–20.

<sup>58</sup> Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 316.

<sup>59</sup> If the Galatians were to think that Paul misrepresented the incident or even told invented stories this would be disastrous for his argument in the epistle. Moreover, given the severe consequences of the incident for Paul himself, his further mission and also the way of the community in Antioch, it is not conceivable that Paul reported things without trying to stick to the truth.

not have to discuss the precise meaning of Paul's words about justification, "works of the law," and πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ here, but it is clear that Paul criticizes the fact that Peter did not act according to the "truth of the gospel" when he (and other Jews) again started separating themselves from the gentiles.

From this example, it is also clear that Paul considered the "truth of the gospel" relevant for other fellow Jews following Christ, in the way they observed dietary and purity laws in communion with gentile believers. This is, in my view, an example that shows that the presuppositions of the Paul-within-Judaism school are historically problematic and not in accord with Paul's explicit views. When Paul says, with an exemplary 1st person singular, that he is "dead to the law" and "crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:19), this is also potentially valid for Peter and the other Jews addressed in the memorized speech in Gal 2:15–21, and, of course for the addressees and the Judaizing "influencers" in Galatia.

### 3.2 *The Fundamental Relativization of Circumcision*

In various passages in his letters, Paul deals with circumcision. But in the manner he discusses circumcision and also the Torah, Paul does not appeal to pagan and certainly not to "Enlightenment" arguments, but instead applies motifs of the contemporary inner-Jewish debate to the situation of the communities of the Christ followers and the questions that arose there.

Circumcision<sup>60</sup> had been the physical and permanent marker of Jewish identity for men since the exile and increasingly since the crisis under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Greeks and Romans considered it a blemish. Thus it became "the exclusive *nota Iudaica*" in the Roman Empire, which was not renounced even in the diaspora. Male converts became Jews by this act, and thus a proselyte also agreed to adopt the entire Torah, while uncircumcised "God-fearers" had to observe it only partially (avoidance of idolatry, ethical behavior), as far as possible, but were not subject to the social restrictions (meal fellowship, business and marriage relations). Of course, there were some debates about the difference between the circumcision performed on the eighth day and the circumcision of adult converts.<sup>61</sup> 'Radical' adherents of a priestly, somewhat 'ontological' understanding of a Jewish pedigree questioned, e.g., the Jewishness of Herod's family and the Idumeans. There were also later Rabbinic discussions whether a circumcision by decision was more valuable than the circumcision imposed at the age of eight days. Yet, despite these debates, circumcision was generally viewed to be the physical sign of being Jewish and to imply the obligation to follow the Torah.

<sup>60</sup> On circumcision, see Andreas Blaschke, *Beschneidung*, TANZ 28 (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 1998); Nina E. Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol*, WUNT 2/295 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

<sup>61</sup> On this, see Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2011).

The “Judaizing” agitation against the practice of admitting gentiles without circumcising them in Antioch and in Galatia (Gal 2:3; 5:2, 11 f.; 6:12–15; Acts 15:1, 5) aimed at the adoption of circumcision, with the opinion that this would also make the converts committed to other Torah commandments. Those “Judaizers” certainly did not subscribe to the view that gentiles must not become Jews. They rather thought that those gentile converts should not stop halfway. In Galatians Paul consequently counters their agitation with a discussion of the meaning and function of the law.

Paul himself was circumcised on the eighth day (Phil 3:5), and it is probable that he fully accepted the practice of circumcision among Jews including circumcising Timothy, who was born from a Jewish mother (Acts 16:3). Paul considers circumcision of high value as a sign of God’s affection to Israel (Rom 2:25; 3:2; 9:4 f.). But, as he explains in Rom 2:25, the historical *prae* is not a soteriological *plus*. With regard to salvation or divine judgement, circumcision is only valid when the Law is also observed (Rom 2:25), as the observance of the Law is the criterion of divine judgement. But in view of the factual sinfulness of all humans, Jews and gentiles (Rom 3:9–12), circumcision is of no soteriological use. It is not a reason for “security” of election, nor is it an occasion for “boasting” (Rom 2:17). It no longer has a soteriological value in itself, but is decisively relativized. Conversely, being uncircumcised is no longer soteriologically relevant (Gal 5:6; 6:15), due to the saving divine action in Christ.

For the soteriological invalidity and insignificance of circumcision Paul cites his own example (Phil 3:4–8). In spite of his perfect Jewish upbringing, he can no longer put his confidence in what he calls the “flesh” (Phil 3:4). Not only in Galatians, but also with regard to his addressees in Corinth, he also rejects the desire for a change of status after their calling to faith. A change of the “status” through circumcision (or likewise the removal of circumcision through a restoration of the foreskin) is generally denied. But the reason is not the impermeability of the ethnic borders (1 Cor 7:17–20), it is not the idea that gentiles must not become Jews. The reason is, instead, that the status granted through circumcision, and thus ethnic status does not matter: “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but (what matters is) obeying the commandments of God” (1 Cor 7:19). In Galatians, he adds a further argument: An additional circumcision of the gentile Christ-followers subsequent to their coming to faith would be a denial of the sufficiency of the saving work of Christ (Gal 5:2), an act of unbelief that could even result in the loss of salvation (Gal 5:4).

As some other Jewish authors of his time,<sup>62</sup> Paul speaks about circumcision in a figurative sense, in which Jewish and gentile Jesus followers have a share (Rom 2:28–30; Phil 3:3). This is not outwardly visible (ἐν τῷ φανερῷ) but in secret (ἐν

<sup>62</sup> See Livesey, *Circumcision*.

τῷ κρυπτῷ), not in the flesh (ἐν σαρκί), but a circumcision of the heart (περιτομή καρδίας), not in the letter (ἐν γράμματι), but in the spirit (ἐν πνεύματι).

With this notion of the circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29), Paul can draw on biblical and early Jewish parallels.<sup>63</sup> But in contrast to other Jewish authors (e.g. Philo),<sup>64</sup> the figurative circumcision is not an additional dimension but it is rhetorically used to show the relativization of the “fleshly” circumcision, the ethnic status. This circumcision of the heart actually redefines who is really a “Jew” (Rom 2:28) or “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), while outward circumcision contributes nothing to this. Thus, Paul can even claim that the figurative circumcision is the real thing: “We are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3).

Paul justifies the soteriological worthlessness of circumcision by use of the example of Abraham (Romans 4) whose circumcision (Genesis 17) took place only after the promise of righteousness to the believer (Gen 15:6). Thus, circumcision is merely the “seal of the righteousness of faith” (Rom 4:11), which was granted to the uncircumcised (Rom 4:10). Thus Scripture ultimately confirms, in Paul’s view, that humans are being justified without being circumcised.

This severe relativization of the identity rooted in circumcision was conceivably offensive to many Jews around Paul. Yet, it is presented within the framework of Jewish questions and traditions. Paul relativizes circumcision and its meaning not as an enlightened “universalist” but *as a Jew*:

a) An initial element of Paul’s Jewish perspective is the halakic distinction between Jews and gentiles: The law does not apply equally to all: only Jews (and proselytes) are obliged to keep the Torah; uncircumcised people are not. Paul presupposes this distinction in Gal 5:1–2.

b) In the wide consensus of Judaism of his time, Paul presupposes the close connection between Torah and circumcision: circumcision is not only a “supplement,” but in principle obliges Jews as well as proselytes to observe the whole Torah (Gal 5:3).

c) The question of the gentiles’ participation in salvation implicitly takes up discourses that diaspora Judaism had to resolve: Most diaspora Jewish communities at that time faced the question how gentiles could associate with the synagogues and, thus, with the people of Israel. Paul does not favor the pattern of the God-fearers, a pattern of “second-order membership.” In his view, gentile believers in Christ should share full participation without any further restriction, as synagogues only granted to full proselytes.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ezek 44:7, 9; Jer 9:24–25; further Philo *QE* 2:2; *QG* 3:46 etc.

<sup>64</sup> Even Philo insists on their implementation among Jews (*Migr.* 89–94) and proselytes (*QE* 2:2). Laxity with regard to circumcision only occurs in the Maccabean period and among radical allegorists in Alexandria, against whom Philo argues in *Migr.* 89–94 (cf. Blaschke, *Beschneidung*, 210–4).

But as this full access to the community of salvation, or even to the people of God is now possible without physical circumcision and without the full obligation to the Torah of Israel, we arrive at a new definition of the “conditions of access” and, thereby also a new definition of the salvific community.<sup>65</sup> In Paul, this is justified soteriologically (through Jesus’ vicarious death), pneumatologically (by the manifestation of the Spirit in the uncircumcised), and exegetically (as the promise came before the law).

It is quite conceivable that this view and praxis led to conflicts with other Jews and with diaspora synagogues, not only because of a kind of rivalry with regard to sympathizers, but also for reasons of principle. From other Jewish perspectives, this could be considered a fundamental abolition of elements that seemed unavailable to the vast majority of contemporary Jews. With this position, the apostle could appear as an apostate to other Jews, and although he himself restlessly worked for the ties between Jewish and gentile Jesus followers, he contributed to the further separation between the growing gentile Christian Church and Judaism.<sup>66</sup>

It is no coincidence that Paul in this context uses fresh terms. He uses the traditional idea of the new creation when he pinpoints the fundamental relativization of circumcision: “Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but new creation” (Gal 6:15). The reference to the eschatological newness and to God’s creational activity claims that behind the redefinition of the identity of the eschatological people of God there is nothing less than God’s eschatological acts in the Christ event.

#### 4. Concluding Reflections: Ethnic Boundaries Removed or Relativized?

How is this related to matters of ethnicity? Is the relativization of ethnic boundaries a removal of ethnic distinctions? Are ethnic boundaries now completely abolished in a universalism of the emerging gentile church? Can we read Gal 3:28 “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female” in this sense? Are all these boundaries now simply “*adiaphora*”<sup>67</sup> in Christ? Or are the three pairs of opposites not on the same level? It is significant that modern interpreters embrace the view that differences with

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 215–48.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. William D. Davies, “Paul: From a Jewish Point of View,” in Davies, Horbury, and Sturdy, *The Early Roman Period*, 678–730, here 730.

<sup>67</sup> Thus Judith Gundry-Volf, “Christ and Gender: A Study of Difference and Equality in Gal. 3:28,” in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift*, FS O. Hofius, ed. Christoph Landmesser et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 439–77, but see the discussion in Cosgrove, “Ethnicity,” 278–80.

regard to gender and social status are or should be completely irrelevant. Perhaps there are different dimensions of “political correctness” at work here so that the sensitivity with regard to ethnic aspects is a different one. Be that as it may, the term “adiaphoron” (taken from later theological debates) is probably misleading here, and as we can see in many passages, that “Paul is not ethnicity-blind.”<sup>68</sup> But the opposing view stressed by Denise K. Buell and Carolyn J. Hodge that Jewishness or “a Judean identity” is the “‘umbrella’ under which he locates all those ‘in Christ’”<sup>69</sup> seems also to be inappropriate.<sup>70</sup>

Looking at Paul’s ecclesiological terminology, it is significant that he does not use “ethnic” terms when addressing his communities, and that he utilizes new terms, such as “new creation” when circumcision and the “classical” identity markers of contemporary Judaism are relativized. It is significant, therefore, that these new communities are something different from “the synagogues” – if we can avoid the term “Judaism” here – and are, of course, also different from the associations and cults of the gentiles. But the eschatologically new entity is not given an “ethnic” name, nor an ethnic definition. There is only the talk about a heavenly “politeuma,” not an earthly one.

The move of second century authors who, then, begin to label the Christian communities in ethnic terms, such as a “new” *genos*, in distinction from Jews and pagans, is a further step, and it would require some more reasoning to explain why those authors, then, chose to label and defend Christianity again in ethnic terms. But this is a different story and is not Paul’s concern. For him, the aspect of participation in the eschatological community of God is of primary importance, and therefore, “there is neither Jew nor gentile [...] in Christ” (Gal 3:28), and “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love” (Gal 5:6).

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<sup>68</sup> Thus Cosgrove, “Ethnicity,” 280.

<sup>69</sup> Buell and Hodge, “Politics of Interpretation,” 249.

<sup>70</sup> Thus Cosgrove, “Ethnicity,” 283–4.

# Messy Metaphors

## Ethnic Transformation in Philo, Romans, and Ephesians

*Joshua D. Garroway*

### 1. Introduction

The American comic, Mitch Hedberg, famously remarked: “I used to do drugs. I still do, but I used to, too.” Like so many of Hedberg’s jokes, the humor stems from the joke’s absurdist riff on our assumptions about everyday language. When a person says, “I used to do drugs,” one assumes that he no longer does. The behavior of the past is mentioned precisely to distinguish it from the present. When Hedberg adds that he still does drugs, the original statement is retroactively rendered a non-sequitur. Why such absurdity makes us laugh is perhaps impossible to explain, but to Hedberg’s many fans, it does. The laughter is nonetheless tinged with the sadness of knowing that Hedberg died prematurely from a drug overdose.

I am reminded of Hedberg’s one-liner whenever I read Paul’s instruction in 1 Cor 12:2: “You know that, when you were Gentiles, you were enticed and led astray to mute idols.” Paul was no absurdist comic. He does not remind the Corinthians of their Gentile past with the intention of humorously observing afterward that they are still Gentiles. The readers *were* Gentiles, Paul intimates, because now they are not. When they were Gentiles, they worshipped idols; now, following baptism into Christ, they are no longer idolatrous Gentiles and ought to be circumspect regarding the spiritual gift of tongues.<sup>1</sup> Paul’s description of his readers as something different from Gentiles resembles similar, if less obvious, statements to the same effect in 1 Cor 5:1 and 1 Thess 4:5.

The comment in 1 Cor 12:2 thus belies the ubiquitous claim that the communities Paul founded were Gentile in constitution, that his charges should be identified as Gentile Christians, Christian Gentiles, Gentiles-in-Christ, or as any other term implying the continuation of Gentile identity after baptism. They may have remained Gentiles in the opinion of James, or Peter, or other mid-first century Jews, and certainly they remain so in the opinion of today’s

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<sup>1</sup> How exactly the transformation occurs is not clear. Matthew Thiessen (*Paul and the Gentile Problem* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 105–60) argues convincingly that it is the *pneuma* Gentiles receive through faith that transforms them.



historians, but not according to Paul (and, based on what Paul tells them, probably according to their own opinion of themselves). Not only does he insist that his recipients *were* rather than *are* Gentiles, but Paul also accords them the sorts of titles one would expect for erstwhile Gentiles: “Israel” (Rom 11:26); “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16); “children of Abraham” (Gal 3:7, 29); “the circumcision” (Phil 3:3); even “Jew” (Rom 2:29). In Paul’s view, there can be no Gentiles-in-Christ because to be in Christ means *ipso facto* that one is not a Gentile.

Except, of course, when it does not. Paul suggests elsewhere that a Gentile baptized into Christ indeed remains a Gentile. Whereas many of Paul’s references to Gentiles as Gentiles can be taken as descriptive of their status prior to baptism – for example, his self-styling as the apostle to the Gentiles might refer only to his audiences as he first encounters them rather than as they are once he has won them over – enough such references make it clear that Paul is able to think about his constituents, even after baptism, as Gentiles. In Rom 16:4, for instance, he speaks of “congregations of Gentiles.” In recounting the incident at Antioch, he calls “Gentiles” the (presumably baptized) partakers in table fellowship (Gal 2:11–14). In Paul’s view, then, there can in fact be Gentiles-in-Christ.

There’s the rub. Any rendering of Paul’s devotees as Gentiles fails to account for Paul’s description of them as no longer Gentiles, as Israel or as the children of Abraham; yet, to call them Jews fails to account for their description as Gentiles; and to call them some third entity – Christians, for example – fails to acknowledge that Paul invariably retains the binary ethnic conceptualization of Israel vis-à-vis Gentiles.<sup>2</sup> Many excellent treatments of Paul’s ethnic thinking in recent years have therefore concentrated less on what the recipients of Paul’s charges really are, ethnically speaking, or what term adequately describes them, and more so on why Paul’s discourse yields such inherent contradiction. For example, the work of Denise Kimber Buell, Cavan Concannon, J. Albert Harrill, David Horrell, Caroline Johnson Hodge, Ishay Rosen-Zvi and Adi Ophir, Joshua Garroway, Paula Fredriksen, and most recently, Denys McDonald asks not whether Paul’s charges are Gentiles, Jews, both or neither, but rather what it is about ancient ethnic discourse that makes such determinations so difficult in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> On this issue in Ephesians, a deutero-Pauline, see Benjamin H. Dunning, “Strangers and Aliens No Longer: Negotiating Identity and Difference in Ephesians 2,” *HTR* 99 (2006): 1–16; Daniel K. Darko, *No Longer Living as the Gentiles: Differentiation and Shared Ethical Values in Ephesians 4.17–6.9* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 31–8.

<sup>3</sup> Denise Kimber Buell, “Challenges and Strategies for Speaking about Ethnicity in the New Testament and New Testament Studies,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 79 (2014): 33–51; Cavan Concannon, *“When You Were Gentiles:” Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul’s Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014); J. Albert Harrill, “Ethnic Fluidity in Ephesians,” *NTS* 60 (2014): 379–402; David G. Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identity*

I have argued, for instance, that Paul's messy descriptions result from the precarious task of reinscribing ancient Jewish identity.<sup>4</sup> Paul was an apocalyptic Jew who believed that the resurrection of Christ had inaugurated a brief phase at the end of history in which the final instantiation of God's people Israel would be formed, and upon Christ's return in short order, saved. This conviction led Paul to believe that a dramatic, end-of-times, ethnic transformation was underway: out was an Israel determined by descent, in was an Israel determined by faith; out was the Law, in was Christ. Many historic constituents of Israel were thus becoming excluded, stripped of their historic ethnic identification, while many Gentiles were enrolling in the ranks of Israel. Drawing on the cultural and linguistic theories of Bhabha, Bakhtin, and others, I have sought to demonstrate how this reevaluation of ethnic identity yields the unstable, contradictory identities one sees in Paul's letters.

Central to this reading is my assumption that Paul was dealing with a conundrum similar to the one faced by several other first-century Jewish writers engaged in ethnic discourse – namely, how can a Gentile become a Jew? How can one who is not descended from Israel nonetheless enlist in the people of Israel? Whether or not conversion is the right word for it, by the first century many Jews (and Gentiles) believed that Gentiles, in some way or another, could abandon their native community and, despite their birth, join the Jewish fold.<sup>5</sup> How this ethnic transformation occurred was up for debate, to be sure, and plenty rejected the idea entirely.<sup>6</sup>

Among those who accepted the possibility of such a transformation were Paul's contemporary, Philo; an admirer of Paul, the author of Ephesians; and Paul himself. Each author deploys unique, but related, metaphors to represent the transformation from Gentile to Jew, from outsider to insider: Philo's "organism," Ephesians' "person," and Paul's olive tree.<sup>7</sup> In each case, I argue here,

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*tities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020); Caroline J. Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Ishay Rosen-Zvi and Adi Ophir, "Paul and the Invention of Gentiles," *JQR* 105 (2015): 1–41; Joshua D. Garroay, *Paul's Gentile-Jews: Neither Jew Nor Gentile, But Both* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017); Denys McDonald, "Ex-Pagan Pagans? Paul, Philo, and Gentile Ethnic Reconfiguration," *JSNT* 45 (2022): 23–50.

<sup>4</sup> Garroay, *Paul's Gentile-Jews*, 45–80. See also Joshua D. Garroay, "The Circumcision of Christ: Romans 15.7–13," *JSNT* 34 (2012): 303–22.

<sup>5</sup> On "conversion" as a potentially problematic term, see Paula Fredriksen, "Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins Whose Time Has Come to Go," *SR* 35 (2006): 231–46. For one classic treatment of Gentiles crossing the boundary and becoming a Jew, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *HTR* 82:1 (1989): 13–33.

<sup>6</sup> On the rejection of the possibility of conversion by certain Jews, see Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> These are not the only metaphors used by Philo, Ephesians, and Paul to describe the

the metaphor describes the attachment of Gentiles to Israel in a way that complicates the transformation, dividing even as it unites, subordinating even as it incorporates, with the result that each author intimates, whether by design or not, that Gentiles remain Gentiles even as they cease to be so. The comparisons thus reveal that Paul – unsurprisingly – saw the world much like any ancient Jew would be expected to. However unique and novel was his belief that Jesus was a risen messiah who would return soon to save an Israel composed primarily of former Gentiles, Paul’s description of Gentile incorporation into Israel participated in a prevailing ethnic discourse.

## 2. Philo

Philo mentions proselytes on several occasions, often in connection with the biblical Abraham, whom he considers the benchmark (κανών)<sup>8</sup> for proselytes, or with the various biblical injunctions to care for the stranger. Proselytes are to be treasured and celebrated, Philo insists, because they have overcome their unfortunate origins. Despite their ignoble birth (δυσγένεια), they have abandoned their relatives (συγγενεῖς), native land (πατρίδα), temples (ιερά), and customs (ἔθη), and come over to piety (εὐσέβεια) and a new citizenship (πολιτεία).<sup>9</sup> Proselytes are thus the precise opposite of Jewish apostates, the scoundrels who disregard their noble birth by pursuing vice, idolatry, and untruth – a group to be considered at greater length below.

As Walter T. Wilson has observed, Philo’s embrace of the proselyte dovetails with the commonplace he deploys in his treatise on nobility.<sup>10</sup> Especially popular among Stoic philosophers was the rhetorical contrast between ancestry and virtue, the latter recognized as the preeminent indicator of a person’s worth. As Seneca put it (misquoting Plato), “every king springs from a race of slaves, and every slave has had kings among his ancestors.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, one should neither presume the greatness of another on account of noble birth nor allow humble origins to thwart a person’s efforts to improve. Virtue is attainable by all. Philo’s exaltation of proselytes is a natural extension of this stoic principle. The

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transformation experienced by proselytes. Philo and Ephesians also deploy the metaphor of the πολιτεία, for example, as emphasized recently by Katell Berthelot, “Entre octroi de la citoyenneté et adoption: les modèles pour penser la conversion au judaïsme à l’époque romaine,” *Pallas* 104 (2017): 37–50.

<sup>8</sup> *Virt.* 219. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>9</sup> Such terminology appears in Philo’s several discussions about proselytes, e.g.: *Virt.* 101–103, 211–219; *Spec.* 1.51–53, 309; *Abr.* 67–88. Especially on the issue of “new citizenship,” see Berthelot, “Entre octroi de la citoyenneté et adoption,” 37–41.

<sup>10</sup> Walter T. Wilson, *Philo of Alexandria: On Virtues: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 381–6.

<sup>11</sup> Seneca, *Epistle* 44, as cited in Wilson, *Philo of Alexandria*, 383.

truth and virtue of the Jews can hardly be withheld from aspiring Gentiles, reckons Philo, seeing as Abraham himself had broken free from the most wretched of Gentile origins to achieve unsurpassed piety, nobility, and virtue. The kinship (συγγένεια) that truly matters, Philo says, is “the holy fellowship of good men.”<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, virtue does not eclipse ancestry entirely in Philo’s understanding of the Jewish polity. A distinction persists between the native-born and the latecomer, as revealed in the following passage:

Besides setting down laws regarding fellow nationals (ὁμοεθνῶν), [Moses] maintains that proselytes are to be considered worthy of every privilege, since, having forsaken their family by blood, their homeland, their customs, the temples and images of their gods and the gifts and honors offered to them, they have traveled to a fine new home, from mythical fabrications to the certainty of truth and the veneration of the One and truly existing God. So he commands those of the nation (τοῦ ἔθνους) to love the proselytes, not only as friends and relatives (συγγενεῖς), but as themselves in both body and soul – in body by acting in common with them so far as this is possible, and in mind by having the same griefs and joys – so as to appear to be, in their distinct parts, a single organism (ἐν εἶναι ζῶον δοκεῖν), joined together and naturally united by the fellowship (κοινωνίας) that it has.<sup>13</sup>

The tone and perspective of this passage are typical of Philo’s positive treatment of proselytes, as he notes that Moses demands equal treatment for proselytes out of respect for their courageous decision to abandon their pagan lives and take up residence in a new nation. The terminology makes clear, however, that proselytes are different from the native-born. Those Jews who are “born from the start” (φύντας ἐξ ἀρχῆς), as Philo elsewhere puts it,<sup>14</sup> are “fellow nationals,” while proselytes are not. Those “of the nation” are to love proselytes “as” relatives, but not because they are relatives. If proselytes are so loved, then the body politic can appear to be a single creature. But appearance is not necessarily reality.

Rhetorical appeals to the body politic were another ancient commonplace.<sup>15</sup> Philo himself uses one in a different passage when examining the laws regarding the manslaughterer who flees to a city of refuge and remains there until the high priest dies. Why should the death of the high priest, of all things, mark the end of the sentence? Philo explains that the high priest corresponds to the vengeful kin because he himself is the closest of kin, figuratively at least, to the collective Israelite nation:

<sup>12</sup> Mos. 2.171, where the context is not proselytes, but Moses exhorting the Levites to execute the sinners at Mount Sinai. They should kill without compunction even their kinsmen because genuine kinship is based on shared goodness rather than shared blood.

<sup>13</sup> Virt. 102–103 (trans. Wilson, *Philo of Alexandria*, 64).

<sup>14</sup> Spec. 1.51.

<sup>15</sup> Wilson (*Philo of Alexandria*, 259) points to numerous examples: Josephus, *B. J.* 5.277–279; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.86.1–5; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 17.19; 39.5; 50.3; Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 24.18, 38–39. See also Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul’s Jewish Identity and Ephesians*, *SNTSMS 130* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 176–9.

The whole nation has a kinsman (συγγενής) and close relative common to all in the high priest, who as ruler dispenses justice to litigants according to the law, who day by day offers prayers and sacrifices and asks for blessings, as for his brothers and parents and children, that every age and every part of the nation regarded as a single body (ὡς ἓν ὅς σῶμα) may be united in one and the same fellowship (κοινωνία), making peace and good order their aim.<sup>16</sup>

The high priest becomes for Philo a metaphor for the political body. By his performing the juridical and cultic rites for a nation composed of many diverse bodies, it is as if the nation converges into a single body united in fellowship. Here, however, no member of the body is prioritized over another: “every age and every portion” are united on seemingly equal terms.<sup>17</sup>

Such is not the case, as we have seen, when Philo deploys a similar metaphor to describe the incorporation of the proselyte into the Israelite body politic. His proselyte is portrayed as a secondary appendage whose incorporation, if it is done through love and equal treatment, might lead to the appearance of a united whole. The metaphor of the integrated creature thus provides a useful but complicated vehicle for describing ethnic transformation.<sup>18</sup> The notion of the Gentile severed from his original national body and affixed to Israel promotes a sense of cohesiveness that will encourage the native-born to admire proselytes and to treat them with dignity and love. At the same time, it accentuates the binary differentiation between native-born and newcomer, old and new, real and apparent.

Philo was not alone in drawing upon the body as a metaphor for the ethnic transformation of Gentiles. Not much later but in a very different context, the author of Ephesians did the same.

### 3. Ephesians

Among its other aims, Ephesians clarifies the mystery that God revealed to Paul. The elaborative clause of Eph 3:6 puts it succinctly: “the Gentiles have become co-inheritors (συγκληρονόμα), co-body members (σύσσωμα), and co-sharers (συμμέτοχα) of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” This

<sup>16</sup> *Spec.* 3.131 (trans. F.H. Colson, *On the Decalogue. On the Special Laws, Book 1–3*, vol. 7 of *Philo*, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937], 559).

<sup>17</sup> This is not to say that each Israelite enjoys the same rights and privileges, but simply that no Israelite is more or less Israelitish than another.

<sup>18</sup> On the notion that a proselyte’s exclusive loyalty to the Jewish god might be seen as an ethnic transformation, Fredriksen (*Paul*, 54) observes that “forging an *exclusive* commitment to a foreign god [...] was tantamount to changing ethnicity.” See also McDonald, “Ex-Pagan Pagans?”; Berthelot (“Entre octroi de la citoyenneté et adoption”), by contrast, contends that, for Philo at least, the metaphor of the πολιτεία, and its unification through law rather than lineage, does not require a notion of ethnic change. Philo uses more images than just the πολιτεία to describe the experience of the proselyte, however.

section of the letter does not specify which inheritance or body the Gentiles have joined, or with whom they have been fused, because the author already addressed these questions in the preceding chapter.<sup>19</sup> Ephesians 2:11–22 indicates that Gentiles in Christ have been included in the polity of Israel. The author first reminds the epistle’s addressees of the time when they were “Gentiles in the flesh [...] without Christ, alienated from the polity of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise” (Eph 2:11–12), and then notes that baptism brought about a transformation to the effect that “you who were once afar have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). Brought near to what? Surely to that which they had previously been alienated, namely the polity of Israel and the attending covenants of the promise.<sup>20</sup>

There’s more, however. This incorporation into Israel became possible because the Israelite body politic itself became identical to the crucified and resurrected body of Christ, a point conveyed through the figure in Eph 2:14–19:

For he is our peace, the one who made both into one and removed the dividing wall – the enmity – in his flesh, having destroyed the law with its commandments and decrees, in order to make the two, through himself, into one new person, thus making peace, and in order to reconcile both to God through one body through the cross, which killed the enmity. He came to proclaim peace to you who were afar and peace to those who were near, because both of us have access through him, in one spirit, to the father. Therefore, you are no longer strangers and aliens but co-citizens with the saints and dwellers in the household of God.

The language in this passage is knotty, with lots of ambiguous prepositional clauses, but it seems clear enough that the author posits Christ as a figure for the body politic in the same way Philo does for the high priest. Philo, recall, depicts the high priest as the single body in whom diverse Israelites coalesce to present prayers and sacrifices before God. In Ephesians, access to God comes not through the high priest but through Christ, now the single body in whom diverse individuals are reconciled to God.

The diversity envisioned by the author of Ephesians is of course different from what Philo describes, and in this sense the figure in Ephesians does double duty. It mirrors not only Philo’s description of the high priest as the embodiment of Israel in *On the Special Laws*, but also his description in *On the Virtues* of the single, united, harmonious organism created by the attachment of proselytes. Whereas Philo portrays the mechanics of Gentile inclusion as essentially

<sup>19</sup> According to Andrew T. Lincoln (*Ephesians* [Dallas, TX: Word, 1990], 175), the majority of commentators understands Eph 3:3b, “just as I wrote briefly,” as a reference to what the same author had written above in Eph 1:9–10 and Eph 2:11–22.

<sup>20</sup> So Margaret Y. MacDonald, “The Problem of Christian Identities in Ephesians: Inspiration from the Work of Nils Alstrup Dahl,” *Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 70 (2016): 97–115, cited here at 102: “Most strikingly, Eph 2:11–22, celebrates the unity of Jew and Gentile in a totality (Israel).” See also Berthelot, “Entre octroi de la citoyenneté et adoption,” 46.

ethical – kindness and empathy to the proselyte give the illusion of unity – in Ephesians it is Christological: Christ, through his death, destroyed the barrier separating Jew from Gentile, namely the Law, so that Gentiles can join Jews and coalesce into a single polity. Christ thus becomes the vehicle for the incorporation of Gentiles into Israel.

Contrary to this view, commentators routinely suggest that the author of Ephesians has in mind a unification of Jew and Gentile within an entity that transcends Israel, perhaps even the sort of “third race” Tertullian would invoke a century later.<sup>21</sup> As Andrew T. Lincoln puts it, baptized Gentiles “have become members of a newly created community whose privileges transcend those of Israel.”<sup>22</sup> Accompanying these claims one often finds Christ’s accomplishment hailed as a feat of universalization that puts an end to the ethnic particularism of God’s erstwhile people, the Jews. Again, Lincoln: “In the creation of the one new person Jew-Gentile distinctions have been overcome.”<sup>23</sup> Tet-Lim N. Yee says that “the author’s ideal is to transpose the exclusive ‘body politic of Israel’ into an inclusive (and non-ethnic) community-body in which the ‘holy ones’/Israel and Gentiles who believe in the Messiah could be together as a harmonious whole.”<sup>24</sup> According to Darrell L. Bock, the figure of the new person in Eph 2:15 represents not merely Jews and Gentiles melded into a common entity, but “humanity reformed.”<sup>25</sup>

Neither of these assumptions seems justified. The author of Ephesians signals his interest in the polity of Israel, not a transcendent third group, with the very first words of the passage. He exhorts the addressees to remember the time when, as Gentiles, they were “without Christ, alienated from the polity of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, not having hope and godless in the world” (Eph 2:11–12). If his point is that baptism has undone the predicaments he just listed, then the author means to say that former Gentiles are now with Christ, members of the covenants of the promise, teeming with hope, God-full in the world, and yes, un-alienated from the polity of Israel. This incorporation into Israel is made explicit at the end of the passage, Eph 2:19, when the author tells his addressees that they are “no longer strangers and aliens but fellow citizens with the saints and dwellers in the household of God.” The co-citizenship (συμπολῖται) in verse 19 points back to the polity (πολιτεία) from which they were estranged in verse 12, namely Israel.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Nat.* 8.1.

<sup>22</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 139. See also Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 181–9; Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 80.

<sup>23</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 151.

<sup>24</sup> Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation*, 176.

<sup>25</sup> Bock, *Ephesians*, 80.

<sup>26</sup> On the Roman cultural context of the “citizen” as the ultimate insider, over and against stranger or alien, see Dunning, “Strangers and Aliens No Longer,” 5–8.



The recurring language of “far” and “near” further indicates the inclusion of Gentiles in the polity of Israel specifically rather than some other unnamed, transcendent entity. Far-off Gentiles, the author says, “were brought near through the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). Later he says that Christ “came to proclaim peace to you who were afar and peace to those who were near” (Eph 2:17). If “you who were afar” refers to the formerly Gentile recipients of the epistle, are not “those who were near” the Jews who retained their nearness within Israel by heeding Christ’s proclamation? Nearness in this passage denotes the God, the hope, and the covenants of the polity of Israel. The author simply reorients this ethnic designation around Christ as opposed to kinship, law observance, or geographic origin.

Accordingly, this new polity scarcely represents a universalized or reformed humanity. It is rather a re-inscription of the ethnic distinction between God’s people Israel and the Gentiles outside. The corporate “new person” in Ephesians is no more or less particularistic, or “ethnic,” than the corporate organism in Philo; it remains a matter of in versus out, God’s people versus not, even if the criteria for inclusion have changed. And the author of Ephesians hardly shrinks from acknowledging that most of humanity remains estranged from the elect. He even calls such outsiders “Gentiles” (Eph 4:17) when distinguishing them from the former Gentiles to whom he is writing. This identification of outsiders as Gentiles hardly squares with the claim that Ephesians envisions a “non-ethnic” community. It also belies Lincoln’s claim that “the separation of the Gentiles from Israel and her election was a cleft so deep that it took the creative act of Christ’s death to fill it.”<sup>27</sup> A deep cleft between Israel and the Gentiles remains, according to Ephesians. Christ did not fill the cleft; he became it.

Nor did reinscribing the binary in terms of Christ liberate it from the inevitable instability it yields when forced to account for relocation across its boundary. Remember that proselytes in Philo’s schema join the Israelite body politic except to the extent that they remain Gentiles, an incompleteness expressed in his expectation that affection from the native-born will engender but the appearance of a single organism. Appearance, not reality. In Ephesians, the incompleteness is more explicit. Even as he acclaims his Gentile addressees as co-citizens in the household of God, the author repeatedly reminds them that they used to be estranged Gentiles and that to some extent they remain so. He even opens the very next section of the letter (Eph 3:1) by referring to them directly as Gentiles. Again, there is no purpose in trying to determine whether the author thinks that his addressees are no longer Gentiles, which he implies (Eph 2:11; 4:17), or remain Gentiles, which he says explicitly (Eph 3:1). The point is that any description of Gentile incorporation into the entity that by definition

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<sup>27</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 144.



does not include them, whether it is drawn up by the hand of Philo, the author of Ephesians, or anyone else, invariably produces ambiguity.

It should be obvious by now that I refer to the author of Ephesians anonymously because I do not think the letter was written by its putative author, Paul. Nonetheless, its ideas and terminology so closely resemble those in Paul's epistles, especially Romans, that characterizing its author as an admirer and early interpreter of Paul seems sensible.<sup>28</sup> In what follows I propose that Ephesians depicts Paul's "mystery" as the eschatological incorporation of Gentiles into Israel because Paul does the just the same in Rom 11. Though his metaphor is different, an olive tree rather than an organism or a person, Paul's effort to narrate Gentile inclusion yields the predictable messiness.

#### 4. Romans 11

The olive tree in Rom 11:17–24 marks the culmination of Paul's defense of the claim he introduced at the outset of Rom 9–11: "It is not as though the word of God has faltered, because not all those descended from Israel are Israel" (Rom 9:6). This claim refutes the assumption that the largescale rejection of Christ by what appears to be Israel undermines the fidelity of God to the promises he made to Israel long ago. On the contrary, Paul ultimately insists, all Israel will be saved (Rom 11:26). Israel will be saved because God now reckons the boundaries of Israel in terms of Christ, not descent. Anyone who descends from Israel but nonetheless rejects Christ is, as a matter of fact, no longer a part of Israel. A remnant continues, as Isaiah had foreseen (Rom 9:27–29), but the remainder of Israel's descendants has gone the way of Ishmael, Esau, the worshipers of Baal, and all the other Israelites who forsook their birthright (whether by choice or by divine decree). By the same token, as Paul says in Rom 9:24–26, Israel in its final, Christ-oriented arrangement will be composed of many persons who lack the proper pedigree. Christ has made it possible for Gentiles who were previously alienated from the polity of Israel and estranged from its covenants, as the author of Ephesians would later put it, to be added to Israel's family tree. The metaphor of the olive tree thus recapitulates Paul's case. The people of Israel, whom God will imminently save, comprises two distinct components: the cultivated olive branches connected naturally to the holy, ancient, patriarchal roots, and the wild branches grafted in unnaturally. The miraculous inclusion of Gentiles (and concomitant excision of Jews) in the final hour of history comprises the mystery to which Paul refers in Rom 11:25, just as the author of Ephe-

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<sup>28</sup> I agree with most of the conclusions reached in Gregory E. Sterling, "From Apostle to the Gentiles to Apostle of the Church: Images of Paul at the End of the First Century," *ZNW* 98 (2007): 74–98.

sians recognized when later recasting it: “[The mystery] is that the Gentiles have become co-inheritors, co-body members, and co-sharers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph 3:6).

Inasmuch as it represents Israel as a single (botanical) body comprised of incongruent parts, Paul’s metaphor resembles the “single organism” Philo invokes when depicting the incorporation of proselytes. Philo does not speak of proselytes explicitly as a prosthesis, but by contrasting them with native-born Israelites (ὁμοεθνῆς) who are commanded to love them as though they were relatives so that together they to appear as one entity, Philo suggests that proselytes are both a part of Israel and not quite Israel at the same time. Paul’s olive tree is more obvious. Gentile entrants into Israel are composed of different stuff. Ripped from the uncultivated tree on which they naturally belong, God has grafted them into a tree on which they do not belong but by whose roots they are sustained. They are in Israel and not quite Israel at the same time.

In Paul’s metaphor, however, the ambiguous identification extends beyond baptized Gentiles. Unbaptized Jews, broken off from their native tree and strewn upon the ground, no longer partake in the body of Israel; and yet, because they are original branches composed of Israelite matter, their re-incorporation into Israel – should they come to realize that Christ is the demarcation – will be simple and natural (Rom 11:24). Apostates, on Paul’s reckoning, have ceased to be Israel insofar as they are no longer attached to the tree, but they nevertheless remain Israel insofar as their material composition has not changed.

Predictably, Philo’s speaks of apostates (and proselytes) in similar terms in a passage from *On Rewards and Punishments*:

The proselyte exalted aloft by his happy lot will be gazed at from all sides, marvelled at and held blessed by all for two things of highest excellence, that he came over to the camp of God and that he has won a prize best suited to his merits, a place in heaven firmly fixed, greater than words dare describe, while the nobly born (εὐπατρίδης) who has falsified the sterling of his high lineage (εὐγένεια) will be dragged right down and carried into Tartarus itself and profound darkness. Thus may all men seeing these examples be brought to a wiser mind and learn that God welcomes the virtue which springs from ignoble birth, that He takes no account of the roots (ρίζα) but accepts the full-grown stem (στελεχὼθέν ἔρως), because it has been changed from a weed into fruitfulness.<sup>29</sup>

The botanical imagery at the end of the passage bears obvious resemblance to Paul’s olive tree. Here, God delivers proselytes from their ignoble origins not by grafting them into a superior tree, but by overlooking their roots and focusing on them instead as newly formed, fruitful shoots. By contrast, it would seem, God disregards the noble roots of apostates and focuses on the desiccated shoots they have chosen to become. Philo may not represent the reconfiguration of lineage in the stark terms Paul does, but his message is about the same: prose-

<sup>29</sup> *Praem.* 152 (trans. F.H. Colson, *On the Special Laws, Book 4. On the Virtues. On Rewards and Punishments*, vol. 8 of *Philo* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press], 409).

lytes receive a “sure habitation in heaven” despite their humble origins, whereas apostates are “hurled down to Tartarus” despite their nobility; likewise, proselytes join the family of Israel while apostates become estranged because, as we saw above, true kinship for Philo is “the holy fellowship of good men.”<sup>30</sup> Paul would no doubt agree, albeit with a modification: true kinship is the holy fellowship of persons in Christ.

## 5. Conclusion

The experience Paul describes in Gal 1:15–16 was profound and transformative, obliging him to reorient his understanding of God, Israel, and history. In time, he came to believe that God – at long last – was making good on the promise to fulfill the covenant with Abraham. A covenant begun with faith was now culminating in faith, a faith made available by the death and resurrection of Christ, God’s son. As a result, Paul concluded, the final iteration of God’s elect people Israel was now being formed on the basis of faith rather than law or descent, and this Israel would be saved once the message of Christ was proclaimed sufficiently far and wide.

However radical it was theologically speaking, the terminology Paul uses to describe this new understanding of Israel is typically Jewish. It is ethnic. It is particularistic. The olive tree of Rom 11:17–24 bears striking resemblance to Philo’s descriptions of the Jewish body politic as a single organism and of the proselyte as a botanical shoot that changes its nature to overcome deficient roots. In all three cases, and in Eph 2:11–22 as well, the metaphors are not expressions of universalism but solutions to the fundamental problem of transformation in ethnic identity – specifically, how it is that Gentiles can alter their pedigree so as to join a people to which they naturally and historically do not belong, how Gentiles can cease to be Gentiles and become citizens of Israel instead. Moreover, what the metaphors share in purpose they also share in shortcoming. However effectively these figures describe the incorporation of Gentiles into the body politic of Israel, they also highlight the degree to which a complete incorporation, an assimilation to the point where erstwhile Gentiles become indistinguishable from erstwhile Jews, remains impossible.

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<sup>30</sup> *Mos.* 2.171.

# Apostle from Israel to the Gentiles

## The Jewish Roots of Paul's Identity and Mission

Brian Rosner

### 1. Introduction

To what the extent does Paul uphold his Jewish identity as apostle to the Gentiles?<sup>1</sup>

Scholarly opinion is divided as to the Jewishness of the Christian Paul. Jürgen Becker, for example, holds that Paul made a fundamental break with Judaism following his Damascus Road experience.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Georg Strecker believes that Paul recognized that in his Gentile mission he had separated himself from Judaism.<sup>3</sup> The Christian Paul certainly seems to have abandoned some Jewish practices when he lived among Gentiles (1 Cor 9:22) and distanced himself from his Jewish past (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:7).

By way of contrast, Jörg Frey argues that “Paul never abandoned his Jewish identity, and some of the convictions he held as a Pharisee remained influential for his work as an apostle.”<sup>4</sup> And Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr’s study of Paul’s autobiographical statements (Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:5–6; 2 Cor 11:22–23; Rom 11:1) concludes that Paul’s Jewish identity had ongoing significance for his work as apostle to the Gentiles and that he uses his Jewish identity in arguing points of his theology.<sup>5</sup> If Paul’s Jewish opponents regarded him as apostate (cf. 1 Thess 2:14–15; Acts 21:28), according to James D. G. Dunn, “Paul could never have accepted that his apostleship to the Gentiles constituted apostasy from Israel. Quite the contrary, he was apostle to the Gentiles precisely as apostle *for* Israel,

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Nicholas Quient for research assistance for portions of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Becker, *Paulus: Der Apostel der Völker* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 34: Paul’s life is divided “aufgrund seiner Berufung in zwei Hälften, wobei der Christ Paulus seine jüdische Lebensperiode fast ganz abgestoßen hat.”

<sup>3</sup> Georg Strecker, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1995), 24: “Paulus [hat] sich als Apostel an die Heiden verstanden [...] und [wusste sich] durch seine Berufung zum Heidenapostel, die zugleich seine Bekehrung einschließt, nach eigenem Verständnis [...] fundamental vom Judentum geschieden.”

<sup>4</sup> Jörg Frey, “Paul’s Jewish Identity,” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripenotrog, AGJU 71 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 297.

<sup>5</sup> Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Heidenapostel aus Israel: Die jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen*, WUNT 62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).

apostle of Israel.”<sup>6</sup> This statement, along with the title of Niebuhr’s book, *Heidenapostel aus Israel*, captures the thesis of this essay and supplies its title: Paul was the “Apostle from Israel to the Gentiles.”

The choice of the words, “from Israel,” is intentional. In Acts Luke has Paul calls himself a Jew twice (21:39; 22:3), but Paul prefers to call himself an “Israelite” in his letters (Rom 9:3–4; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). As Michael F. Bird suggests, “[t]he designations ‘Israel’ and ‘Israelite’ were evidently positive for Paul as they denoted continuity with God’s purposes and plan first announced to the Patriarchs and fulfilled in the economy of God’s action in Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

The following three sections of this essay examine the Jewishness of Paul’s identity, fundamental beliefs, and strategy in his Gentile mission. In each case I conclude that as apostle from Israel to the Gentiles Paul was Jewish to the roots<sup>8</sup>:

1. When Paul describes himself in connection with his Gentile mission, he utilizes identities drawn from the Jewish Scriptures that include a role in extending the salvation of God to the nations.
2. Paul has not abandoned the central beliefs and symbols of Judaism, but rather reconfigures them in the light of his vision of Jesus Christ.
3. Paul’s approach to dealing with Gentile believers in Jesus Christ is thoroughly Jewish and his agenda follows emphases and patterns evident in early Jewish moral teaching.

## 2. Paul the Apostle, Servant, Prophet, Priest, and Herald

There are many answers to the question of the identity of the Apostle Paul: Paul was a Jew, a Roman citizen, a follower of Jesus Christ, a tentmaker, a letter writer, a missionary, a community founder, a teacher, a sage, a curator of a collection, a networker, a team leader, a prisoner, a traveller, and so on. All of these are best understood when considered in the context of the ancient world and each has various points of contact with contemporary Greco-Roman and Jewish comparable identities and occupations.<sup>9</sup> They all impinge upon or relate to his

<sup>6</sup> James D.G. Dunn, “Paul: Apostate or Apostle of Israel,” *ZNW* 89 (1998): 256–71, here 269. Italics original.

<sup>7</sup> Michael F. Bird, “Salvation in Paul’s Judaism,” in *Paul and Judaism: Crosscurrents in Pauline Exegesis and the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2014), 27.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Morna D. Hooker, “Paul – Apostle to the Gentiles,” *Epworth Review* 18/2 (1991): 85, “Paul is Jewish to the roots.”

<sup>9</sup> E.g., on Paul as community founder, see James C. Hanges, *Paul, Founder of Churches: A Study in Light of the Evidence for the Role of Founder-Figures in the Hellenistic-Roman Period*, WUNT 292 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); on Paul as teacher, see Devin L. White,

Gentile mission in one way or another. Apart from the first three, they are functional identities, capturing a facet of Paul's prodigious and varied activity.

However, there are five other descriptions of Paul that stand out from the rest and relate in a more intrinsic way to his Gentile mission: apostle, servant, prophet, priest, and herald. The five are Paul's self-descriptions, whether explicitly or implicitly, and overlap in various ways. They each have roots in the Jewish Scriptures. And most significantly for our purposes, each defines and gives impetus to his Gentile mission.

### 2.1 *Called to Be an Apostle*

In the traditional Pauline corpus, Paul is identified as an apostle (agent or messenger) of Christ Jesus in the epistolary prescripts of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. As one sent by Jesus Christ Paul uses the language of calling (cf. e.g., 1 Cor 1:1: κλητὸς ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ), to describe his commission. The OT in Greek regularly uses the concept of calling to refer to the granting of roles or tasks by God: for example, to Abraham to be the father of a nation, to Cyrus of Persia as an agent of providence, and to Israel to be a light to the Gentiles.

Paul conceives of his call to apostleship as granting him a specific task in terms of a Gentile mission. This can be seen in the way Paul relates his apostleship to the predominantly Gentile church of God in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 12:2). In 1 Corinthians 9:1–2 he reminds the Corinthians that their own favorable standing before God is a result of his “work in the Lord” and that they are “the seal of [his] apostleship,” thus highlighting the direct relevance of Paul's status and stature for the Corinthians' ongoing spiritual life. Further, in 4:14–16 he admonishes them as their “father,” another way of referring to his role as the apostolic founder of the church. And in 15:1–2 Paul explicitly reminds them that their salvation came about when Paul preached the gospel to them.

What is the overall goal of Paul's apostolic activity? Paul sees the final end of the mighty salvation-historical drama in which he is caught up to be the glory of God. While much modern biblical scholarship has marginalized both salvation-history and the concept of God's glory in Paul's thought, it is clear that both themes are frequently present and often linked.<sup>10</sup> Paul ascribes glory to God for his gracious election and blessing of certain people and family groups in the history of Israel, for his bestowal upon the covenant people of Israel of certain key redemptive advantages (Rom 3:2, 9:3–5; cf. Eph 2:12), for his revela-

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*Teacher of the Nations: Ancient Educational Traditions and Paul's Argument in 1 Corinthians*, BZNW 227 (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, “Paul and Salvation History,” in *The Paradoxes of Paul*, vol. 2 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck and Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 297–342, here 322–39.

tion of truth through Israel's Scriptures (2 Cor 1:20; Rom 11:33–36), and for his grace extended even to Paul and to Gentile Christians (Rom 15:7; Gal 1:3–5, 24). This emphasis on the glory of God is a major theme throughout the Jewish Scriptures, tied firmly to historical events, and theologically rich.<sup>11</sup> The glory of God is also of fundamental importance for Paul's mission in relation to the Gentiles.

For all Jews the establishment of God's glory necessarily involves the removal of all false worship. The salvation of the Exodus required judgment against the false gods of Egypt (Exod 12:12). The taking of the Promised Land required demolition of the false idolatrous worship taking place in Canaan (Deut 4:15–24; Josh 23:7). A specially chosen place set apart for the worship of God's glory and name is required because of the existence of other shrines dedicated to the worship of false deities by the nations (Deut 12:2–14). The temple, therefore, stands as the place where all the nations are beckoned to come and worship God alongside Israel (1 Chr 16:23–33; cf. Ps 96) – abandoning their own idolatrous practices. The history of Israel herself is a long struggle with idolatry, with the destruction of the temple as the appalling conclusion to this struggle. Yet it was not simply a blow for the nation of Israel; more significantly, it was a terrible indictment of God's name and glory (Dan 9:15–19; Ezek 36:22–23). Significantly, in connection with Paul's Gentile mission, as part of Israel's destiny, the prophets and psalmists speak of the nations abandoning their idols and worshipping God with lavish praise (Ps 66:1–4; 138:4–5; Hab 2:14; Zeph 3:9–10; Mal 1:11).

Paul's apostolic mission is defined by a vision of Gentiles turning from idolatry to serve the living and true God (1 Thess 1:9). With respect to Paul's appropriation of this theme, Richard B. Hays observes that "Isaiah offers the clearest expression in the Old Testament of a universalistic, eschatological vision in which the restoration of Israel in Zion is accompanied by an ingathering of Gentiles to worship the Lord."<sup>12</sup> A key text for Paul in this regard is Isaiah 66, to which Paul alludes in his discussion of his gospel preaching to Gentiles as a priestly service (see "Priest of God's Good News" below).

## 2.2 *Servant of the Lord*

In Romans 1:1 (cf. 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1) Paul introduces himself as a servant of Christ Jesus, δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. A good case can be made that in saying this he is drawing on the scriptural figure of the servant of the Lord found in Isa 40–55. This servant has a special role with respect to the nations: Isa 49:3, 6b LXX: "He [the Lord] said to me, You are my servant [δοῦλος], Israel,

<sup>11</sup> Yarbrough, "Paul and Salvation History," 336–9.

<sup>12</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 162.

and in you I will be glorified. ... Behold, I have made you a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, that my salvation may extend to the end of the earth.”

Lionel J. Windsor lays out the evidence for Paul’s identification with the Isaianic servant in Romans.<sup>13</sup> Paul’s self-description in Romans 1:1 as a servant of Christ Jesus is immediately followed by an assertion that his gospel is firmly set in the prophetic Scriptures, a gospel that is directly linked to his own apostolic vocation. In Isaiah 41:9 the servant, like Paul, is “called” by God. Moreover, Isaiah is “both statistically and substantively the most important scriptural source for Paul in Romans.”<sup>14</sup> Arguably, Paul links his ministry in a number of other places with the Isaianic Servant: Gal 1:10–16, alluding to Isa 49:1, 4, 6; 2 Cor 6:2, citing Isa 49:8; and Phil 2:16, alluding to Isa 49:4.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.3 *Prophet of God*

Even though Paul never calls himself a prophet, many scholars argue that prophet is a critical identity for Paul’s self-understanding. Sandnes observes that “it is in fact a commonplace in Pauline scholarship that Paul’s apostolate was more or less marked by prophetic features.”<sup>16</sup>

Paul’s famous conversion/calling on the road to Damascus links his identity to that of a Jewish prophet.<sup>17</sup> Luke’s account in Acts 9 echoes the vivid experiences of Isaiah, Jeremiah and, especially, Ezekiel. Both Paul (according to Acts) and Ezekiel, for example, received a revelation, heard a voice and fell to the ground. When Ezekiel beheld the glory of God he reports, “I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one that spoke” (Ezek 1:28). Then the Lord said: “Stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you ... I send you to the people of Israel” (2:1).

With reference to Paul’s own letters, Terrence Donaldson observes that “Paul himself describes his experience not as a conversion but as a call, using the traditional vocabulary of prophetic call narratives (Gal 1:15–16; cf. Isa 49:1; Jer

<sup>13</sup> Lionel J. Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel: How Paul’s Jewish Identity Informs his Apostolic Ministry, with Special Reference to Romans*, BZNW 205 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 100–4.

<sup>14</sup> Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel*, 103–4.

<sup>16</sup> Karl O. Sandnes, *Paul – One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle’s Self-Understanding*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 2. Cf. L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 201, who contends that in describing himself as being sent by Jesus Christ, “Paul presented his task in direct continuity with the prophets of the Old Testament. They too saw themselves as ‘sent by God.’”

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Sandnes, *Paul – One of the Prophets*, 242: “It is the conviction of the present writer that declaring the prophetic element in Paul’s presentation of the Damascus revelation as in some way accidental is to deprive of it its deepest significance. It is by recalling the tradition of the biblical prophets that Paul is able to lay a legitimate foundation for his apostolate.”



1:5).<sup>18</sup> And Jeffrey Aernie's study of the evidence of 2 Corinthians concludes that "Ezekiel's prophetic discourse provides one of the foundations on which Paul is able to develop this apostolic rhetoric and describe his apostolic persona."<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Seyoon Kim writes:

In view of the form- and tradition- history of prophetic call visions in the OT and Judaism, it is not difficult to imagine that the nature or form of the Damascus Christophany led Paul to turn to the prophetic call visions such as Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 for an interpretation of its meaning for him, and that from a combined reading of Isaiah 6 and the call/commission narratives of the Servant passages he obtained his conviction about the Lord's call and sending as an apostle for the Gentiles.<sup>20</sup>

The difference between Ezekiel and Paul is, of course, that Paul was sent primarily not to Israel, but to the Gentiles. Nonetheless, as K. M. Rochester notes, there are many ways in which Ezekiel may have been a model and inspiration for Paul:

There is much in common in these prophetic ministries. Both experience a remembered, personal encounter with Yahweh, in which they are addressed, commissioned and sent out to bear messages from Yahweh. Both speak of the need to turn away from wickedness in its various forms, and to conform humbly to Yahweh's requirements. Both must persevere in unpopular work, in the face of opposition which is, at times, strenuous. Both call for the person and presence of Yahweh to be regarded more highly than his temple and its cult. Both give warnings in relation to the fall of Jerusalem and its temple, and both speak out forcefully against prophets who have not been sent, whose messages are not from Yahweh, and whose lifestyles and motives are without integrity.<sup>21</sup>

#### 2.4 Priest of God's Good News

In Romans 15:15–16 Paul explains his vocation in priestly terms: "the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Much of his understanding here derives from OT texts like Mal 1:11,<sup>22</sup> where there is a prophecy of Gentiles bringing temple worship, which arguably Paul believed was being fulfilled in his ministry. The Lord says:

<sup>18</sup> Terence Donaldson, "Zealot and Convert: The Origin of Paul's Christ-Torah Antithesis," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 655–82, here 690.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey W. Aernie, "Tablets of Fleshly Hearts: Paul and Ezekiel in Concert," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 6:1 (2016): 55–73, here 57.

<sup>20</sup> Seyoon Kim, "Paul as an Eschatological Herald," in *Paul as Missionary*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner (London, T&T Clark, 2011), 16.

<sup>21</sup> Kathleen M. Rochester, "Prophetic ministry in Jeremiah and Ezekiel," *TB* 61:2 (2010): 317–220, here 319.

<sup>22</sup> See Brian S. Rosner and Roy E. Ciampa, "The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians: A Biblical/Jewish Approach," *NTS* 52:2 (2006): 205–18.

My name will be glorified among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be glorified among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty.

Intriguingly, Philo lends credibility to the notion of a priestly service for the sake of non-Jews. In *Abr.* 1.98 he speaks of “the offices of priesthood and prophecy on behalf of the whole human race,” ὑπὲρ παντὸς ἀνθρώπων γένους ἱερωσύνην καὶ προφητείαν λαχεῖν. And in *Spec.* 2.162 he writes of “an offering both for the nation separately, and also a common one for the whole race of mankind; so that the people by it worship the living God, both for themselves and for all the rest of mankind,” τὴν ἀπαρχὴν καὶ τοῦ ἔθνους ἰδίαν καὶ ὑπὲρ ἅπαντος ἀνθρώπων γένους κοινήν.

With reference to Rom 15:16, Arland J. Hultgren explains Paul’s view of his commission with reference to prophecies of the Jewish Scriptures:

The new age, which has already dawned with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is the messianic kingdom, and that kingdom includes in principle all the nations in its scope, as the eschatological promises of the prophets declared it would. Those promises had been set forth in the Scriptures of Israel, and they were foundational for Paul’s mission to the Gentiles.<sup>23</sup>

Hultgren points to Isa 66 as the backbone of Paul’s account of his mission in Rom 15. Indeed, a striking and significant vision of the eschatological glory of God appears in the final verses of Isaiah (66:18–24), where God’s ultimate glory is described in terms of the involvement of the Gentiles in temple worship. There is both an ‘outward’ and an ‘inward’ dynamic to God’s glorification: God’s glory will be declared to the nations by missionaries (v. 19), and the nations will come and glorify God in temple worship (vv. 18, 23). The eschatological remnant will act as priests in God’s temple in Jerusalem (v. 20), bringing those scattered among the nations as an offering to the LORD.

The geographical references to the nations in Isa 66:19 are of particular interest to understanding Paul’s Gentile mission. James M. Scott has argued that the Table of Nations of Gen 10 (cf. 1 Chr 1:1–2:2) represents an ethnographic and geographic tradition that pervades the Old Testament and Jewish tradition.<sup>24</sup> It is a verbal ‘map’; a detailed geographical world-view that effectively places Israel in the center of the world (cf. Ezek 5:5, chs. 38–39).<sup>25</sup> This ‘map’ is also applicable to Old Testament eschatology. Isaiah 66:18–20, in many of its details, reflects the Table of Nations tradition as it announces a positive eschatological

<sup>23</sup> Arland J. Hultgren, “The Scriptural Foundations for Paul’s Mission to the Gentiles,” in *Paul and His Theology*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 44.

<sup>24</sup> James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul’s Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians*, WUNT 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 5–56.

<sup>25</sup> Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 5–10.

expectation for the nations.<sup>26</sup> In Isaiah 66:19, each of the three sons of Noah is represented: Shem (Lydians), Ham (Lybians), and Japheth (Tarshish, Tubal, Greece). The focus of the eschatological expectation is, of course, Jerusalem, situated in the center of the world.

According to Scott, the Table of Nations is at the forefront of Paul's mind when he describes his own eschatological mission to the nations in geographical terms (Rom 15:19).<sup>27</sup> Paul has "fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ ... from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum." That is, Paul's mission to the nations is viewed from the perspective of Jerusalem as the center of a circle embracing the whole inhabited world (cf. Ezek 5:5). Riesner makes the connection with Isa 66:18–21 even more explicit.<sup>28</sup> For Riesner, "Paul read this text as being fulfilled in his own activity, and traces of this exegesis stand behind Rom 15:16–24".<sup>29</sup> The striking use of cultic terminology in Rom 15:16 to describe Gentile evangelization suggests an Old Testament background. Isaiah 66:18–21, with its unique juxtaposition of Gentile mission and temple-related descriptions of Gentile worship, is the strongest contender. Riesner presents an impressive array of further parallels between these two passages.<sup>30</sup> For Paul, the nature of the eschatological temple and the glory that God is to receive through worldwide worship are understood in the light of the kingdom God has established through his Son, the universal Lord.

## 2.5 *Gospel Herald*

Paul claims in 1 Cor 1:17 that Christ sent him to preach the gospel, εὐαγγελίζω. The language of preaching the gospel derives from several texts in Isaiah, where an end-time herald commissioned by God announces his reign of salvation. Isaiah 52:7, which Paul quotes in Rom 10:15, reads: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news [ὡς ὥραῖοι οἱ πόδες τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων [τὰ] ἀγαθά], who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"

Arguably, Paul's use of εὐαγγελ-terminology (εὐαγγελίζω, προεὐαγγελίζομαι, εὐαγγέλιον, εὐαγγελιστής) is indebted to Isa 40:9, 52:7, and 61:1, where, as John P. Dickson points out, "'secular' messenger language had been transposed to a

<sup>26</sup> Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 13–14.

<sup>27</sup> Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 135–49.

<sup>28</sup> Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*, trans. Doug Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 245–53. Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 145–7, criticizes Riesner for relying overly on this one text. Scott claims that Paul has in mind the whole Table of Nations tradition, which in turn informs the Isaiah text. But Riesner has found numerous parallels with Isa 66:18–21 in Rom 15:16–28, beyond the geographical references of v. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 246.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., the emissaries of Isa 66:19 are sent to those "who have not yet heard my name" and Paul in Rom 15:20 evangelizes "where the name Christ has not yet been named" (248–9).

higher, eschatological level, depicting the end-time herald(s) commissioned by Israel's God to announce his salvific reign."<sup>31</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher contends that Paul's gospel heralding is an eschatological, divinely commissioned activity.<sup>32</sup> Although Paul the eschatological herald is less well-known than other ways of describing his identity, it turns out to be a key ingredient in understanding his agenda as apostle to the Gentiles.

For Paul, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus was the decisive event in the history of Israel and even the world. Galatians, for example, "reflects a salvation-historical perspective in which the coming of Christ is seen to be the climactic fulfillment towards which the whole history of Israel has been leading."<sup>33</sup> The promises to the Jewish forefather Abraham (Gal 3:7–8, 16–17, 29; 4:22–23), the giving of the law (Gal 3:17, 19, 4:24–25), the execution of the curse of the law in Israel's exile (Gal 3:10, 13; 4:24–25), and the prophetic promise regarding the future salvation and restoration of God's people (Gal 1:6–9) are all part of a unified historical drama which climaxes in the coming of Jesus, his death for sins and his resurrection from the dead. Yet Paul does not regard this 'fulfillment' simply as the inevitable outworking of secular historical processes in Israel's history; it is, rather, an 'apocalyptic' fulfillment, "the dramatic and climactic inbreaking of the eschatological age of salvation".<sup>34</sup> In Jesus Christ, God has pierced the barrier between the divine and human (Gal 1:12), heaven and earth (Gal 4:25–26), Spirit and flesh (Gal 5:16–17), new and old creation (Gal 6:15). A new age has dawned in which God the Father deals with humanity as sons, not slaves (Gal. 4:3–5); where humans relate to God not by law, but by faith working through love (Gal 3:23, 25; 5:6).

The salvation-historical and apocalyptic perspectives are not, for Paul, two irreconcilable outlooks standing in unresolved tension. Instead, the two perspectives converge in Paul's thought such that he regards the history of the particular nation of Israel as finding its fulfillment, through Jesus Christ, in salvation for the entire world. The convergence of salvation-historical and apocalyptic motifs is nowhere more apparent than in the two 'bookends' to Rom 1:1–5 and 16:25–27. The gospel of Jesus Christ, descended from David according to the flesh yet declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, has cosmic significance. This 'mystery' that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through

<sup>31</sup> John P. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities: The Shape, Extent and Background of Early Christian Mission*, WUNT 2/159 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 176.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Pauline Gospel," in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 156–65.

<sup>33</sup> Roy E. Ciampa, "Galatians" in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, and Donald A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy (Westmont, IL: IVP, 2000), 311.

<sup>34</sup> Ciampa, "Galatians", 311.

the prophetic writings (i.e., the historical Scriptures of Israel) has been made known to all nations, and must be proclaimed to the world and its authorities. It is the eschatological “power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16). Paul the Jew regards himself as a herald who has been commissioned by Jesus to perform this task. Paul has been sent, through a special revelation of his Son, to preach Christ to the Gentiles (Gal 1:11, 16). He is one of two ‘point men’ in God’s eschatological mission, having been entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles just as Peter was entrusted with the gospel to the Jews (Gal 2:7).

### 3. Paul and the Pillars of Judaism

When considering the Jewishness of the apostle to the Gentiles from Israel, to what are we comparing him? The question of Paul’s relationship to Judaism raises the thorny question of whether it is possible to speak of Judaism in the singular, given the diverse beliefs and practices of Jews in antiquity. For example, Philo of Alexandria, the Pharisees in the Gospels, and the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness would seem to have very little in common. What, then, defines ancient Judaism? Should we only speak of Judaisms?<sup>35</sup>

Notwithstanding undeniable first-century variations, it is still possible to use the term “Judaism” in the singular. James C. Vanderkam puts it well:

The surviving evidence exhibits a richness and diversity in the Judaism of the Second Temple era, a diversity so great that some have resorted to the neologism ‘Judaisms’ to express it. Yet, despite the undoubted diversity present in the texts, there are fundamental beliefs and practices that would have been accepted by virtually all Jews during those centuries and that justify retaining the singular noun Judaism.<sup>36</sup>

So, what are the fundamental beliefs and practices that define ancient Judaism and how does Paul measure up against them?<sup>37</sup> The most-commonly listed candidates for the so-called pillars of ancient Judaism are election, Torah, temple,

<sup>35</sup> Cf. e.g., J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 9: “So varied was Jewish society in the land of Israel in this period, and so varied were the Jewish groups, that scholars no longer speak of Judaism in the singular when discussing this formative and fertile period in Jewish history. Instead, we speak about Judaisms. In this time and place, there existed a number of competing, even rival Judaisms.”

<sup>36</sup> James C. Vanderkam, “Judaism in the Land of Israel,” in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 91.

<sup>37</sup> This section builds on Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (Downers Grove: Apollos and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2013), ch. 7. Cf. David Horrell, *An Introduction to the Study of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 89: “One of the most difficult areas in the study of Paul lies in trying to understand the ways in which, and the extent to which, Paul’s perspectives on his ancestral faith were reconfigured in the light of his vision of Christ.”

the land, and the Shema. Intriguingly, in Acts 21, when Paul arrived in Jerusalem after his third missionary journey, he was greeted with the charge that he was teaching against “our people, our law and this place [viz., the temple]” (Acts 21:28). How can it be claimed that Paul remains Jewish to the roots when, according to some Jews at least, Paul rejects the core beliefs of Judaism?

Did Paul teach against the pillars of Judaism? The charge seems to stick. With respect to election of Israel, in Romans Paul opposes the notion that the Jews, Abraham’s sons, constitute the people of God – “For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel” (9:6). Paul describes the Law of Moses as an enslaving power, increasing trespass and used by sin to bring about death (Rom 5:20; 7:5; cf. Gal 4:1–10) and insists that believers in Christ are not under the law (6:14). And although Paul never explicitly rejects the Jewish temple and its priesthood and sacrifices, he implies as much in his use of cultic imagery to refer to something else. From one vantage point, the career of the Apostle Paul, reminiscent of Samson with his hair cut, shook profoundly the three main pillars of ancient Judaism.

However, such a judgement may be hasty. Even on such fundamental matters of election, Torah and temple there is disagreement among Jews in the first century. Indeed, it is important to remember that Paul’s churches were not alone in struggling to define themselves over against the mother faith. Other Jewish ‘sects’, such as the Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees and Zealots, also fought over questions of the identity of the people of God. Indeed, intra-Jewish polemic in the first century was rife and sharp.<sup>38</sup>

The question to ponder with respect to Paul’s mission is what a smaller group does with the iconic symbols of the mother group when it begins to break away. In Paul’s case the Essenes at Qumran make an interesting point of comparison. The sectarian documents of the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that the sectaries did not abolish but rather reconfigured the pillars of Judaism. First, they denied the validity of the Jerusalem temple and priesthood, asserting their own alternative in a new order and a spiritualized dwelling place of God. They asserted the superiority of their own interpretation of Torah and supplemented it with their own sacred interpretations. And they redefined the scope of the election of the nation, replacing it with a new definition of the sons of light and the sons of darkness. In each case they continue to affirm a belief in election, the institution of the Temple and the Law of Moses, albeit one which many fellow Jews would have strongly contested.

Similarly, it can be argued that rather than abandoning them, Paul reconfigured the pillars of Judaism. With respect to election, in Romans Paul identifies believers in Christ as the new people of God, whom he describes as the elect

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<sup>38</sup> See the literature cited in James D. G. Dunn, “Echoes of Intra-Jewish Polemic in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians”, *JBL* 112:3 (1993): 459–77.

(8:33); called (1:6–7; 8:28, 30; 9:7, 12, 24–28); beloved (1:7; 9:25), saints (1:7), beloved children of Abraham (4:11–12, 16–17), and the true circumcision (2:28–29). As I have argued in *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, if Paul rejects the law as law-covenant and legal code, he also re-appropriates it in two ways, as prophecy of the gospel and wisdom for living. As regards the temple, Paul identifies the church as the dwelling place of God, thereby replacing the Jerusalem temple. In Romans, for example, Christ is the mercy seat and/or the sacrifice of atonement (3:21–26); believers offer their bodies as living sacrifices (cf. cultic terminology in 12:1–2) and Paul himself gives “priestly service” (15:17).

If Paul seems to depart from Judaism with respect to its core beliefs, a closer look indicates that even as apostle to the Gentiles Paul remains within Judaism in that he reinterprets rather than rejects such distinctives.

#### 4. Paul’s Agenda and Strategy as Apostle to the Gentiles

A third line of evidence that Paul upholds his Jewish identity as apostle to the Gentiles concerns the way in which he goes about reforming the conduct of believers in Christ and forming the new communities of faith. In short, Paul’s agenda and strategy as apostle to the Gentiles is demonstrably Jewish in both content and approach. We can see this in his indebtedness to the Jewish Scriptures on such matters and in comparison with early Jewish non-canonical moral teaching.

The vices Paul most commonly seeks to address in his letters, namely sexual immorality and idolatry, are precisely those that Jews found most abhorrent about Gentiles. It is widely recognized that in early Jewish thinking Gentiles were consistently characterized by two particularly abhorrent vices: sexual immorality and idolatry. V.P. Furnish writes: “For the apostle as for the Jews, rejecting idolatry and abstaining from sexual immorality ... are key identity markers of the faithful community.”<sup>39</sup>

With reference to Paul’s letters, Peder Borgen notes that the vice lists of Gal 5:19–21 and 1 Cor 6:9–11, which in context contrast pagan and Christian lifestyles, have only these two sins in common.<sup>40</sup> The dangers of sexual immorality and idolatry are in fact major concerns in large parts of 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 5–7 Paul deals with sexual immorality (5:1–13; 6:12–20) and sex in marriage (7:1–40).<sup>41</sup> The arrangement of ethical material within these chapters is

<sup>39</sup> Victor P. Furnish, *The Theology of First Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 51. Cf. Peder Borgen, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 245: “two vices [sexual immorality and idolatry] are central in Jewish characterising of the pagan way of life.”

<sup>40</sup> Borgen, *Early Christianity*, 240. Sexual immorality and idolatry also occur in Col 3:5; Eph 5:5; Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; Rev 22:15.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Cor 6:1–11, on lawsuits, is the only topic unrelated to sex in chs. 5–7.



reminiscent of Hellenistic Jewish parenesis, reported by K.-W. Niebuhr,<sup>42</sup> which discusses sexual deviations, such as incest and homosexuality, and sexual relations in marriage in close proximity. In 1 Corinthians 8–14 Paul addresses idolatry (8:1–11:1) and worship of the living God (11:2–14:40). The Jewish roots of Paul's concerns in both cases is apparent in that Paul explicitly ties the two vices to Old Testament background in his discussion of Israel's failures in 1 Cor 10:7–8 and their inclusion in the vice list of 5:11 is based on their inclusion in a list of sins associated with a Deuteronomic expulsion formula.<sup>43</sup> 2 Corinthians carries forward this stress on the dangers of idolatry (2 Cor 6:16–7:1) and sexual immorality (2 Cor 12:19–21).

A clear example of the same emphases from early Jewish writings is the *Sibylline Oracles*, for as J.J. Collins observes, “[t]he sins in which the Sibyl expresses most interest are idolatry and sexual offenses.”<sup>44</sup> That the emphasis on these two vices in early Jewish and Christian thought is based on scriptural interpretation can be seen in William Loader's observation that much Jewish and Christian interpretation of the Decalogue elevates the prohibition of adultery above murder such that idolatry heads the first table and sexual immorality the second.<sup>45</sup>

Paul's moral sensibilities remain thoroughly Jewish. His basic strategy for sanctifying Gentile believers is also Jewish in key respects. This can be seen in patterns evident in three of Paul's earliest letters (1 Thessalonians, Romans and 1 Corinthians) when he expounds the nature of Gentile conversion, the dynamics of pagan sin, and his own missionary agenda. Intriguingly, the same basic approach to moral transformation is found in examples of post-biblical Jewish moral teaching (the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the *Sibylline Oracles*).

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10, a passage that Jörg Frey believes shows Paul's “familiarity with motifs and forms of Hellenistic-Jewish preaching,”<sup>46</sup> Paul describes the conversion of Thessalonian pagans: they “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead.” Here Gentile conversion is understood to entail the rejec-

<sup>42</sup> Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Gesetz und Paränese. Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur*, WUNT 2/28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 232.

<sup>43</sup> Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5–7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 69; cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 86.

<sup>44</sup> John J. Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2015), 1:317–472, here 323.

<sup>45</sup> William Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 7; “The effect is to make it [adultery] the first of the second table, thus to elevate its significance for hearers who sense this bipartite division of the decalogue, suggested to hearers by the two tablets of stone (Exod 31:18) and by the changed focus of the content in the second half. Adultery receives, in that sense, greater prominence.”

<sup>46</sup> Frey, “Paul's Jewish Identity,” 294.



tion of idolatry in favor of the service of the true and living God and his resurrected Son. Christine Elizabeth Hayes points out that in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 “peoples who do not know God are described as sexually immoral and impure; By contrast, those called by God must be sanctified, by avoiding the sexual immorality (*porneia*) and impurity of such peoples”.<sup>47</sup> Thus, according to 1 Thessalonians, those who convert to the God of Israel and of Jesus Christ must turn away from both idols (1:9–10) and sexual immorality (4:3–8) to worship him. The notion of hope expressed by the short phrase “wait for his Son from heaven” (1:10) is expanded in 4:13–18, where future bodily resurrection is promised to all those who are “in Christ” when Jesus “descends from heaven.”

When we come to Romans the same priorities are evident. According to Romans 1:21–28 the typical Gentile vices of idolatry and sexual immorality are rooted in the futility of Gentile thinking and the senselessness of Gentile hearts (v. 21): “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools” (v. 22). It was their lack of true wisdom (despite their claim to possess it) that led them to “exchange the glory of the immortal God for images” of human or other creatures (v. 23) and as a result “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity”, especially homosexual behavior (vv. 24–28). All of this is all tied to the glory of God. The foolishness of the Gentiles is related to the fact that they “neither glorified [God] as God nor gave thanks to him” (v. 21) and, as indicated above, their idolatry is described as an act of exchanging “the glory of the immortal God for images” (v. 23). The proper glorification of God, which should have been expected, was replaced by idolatry and sexual immorality.

Paul’s missionary agenda is laid out most fully in Rom 15. Consistent with the eschatological vision of Isa 66:18–21 (see “Priest of God’s Good News” above), Paul’s *raison d’être* is explained using temple imagery in v. 16: as “a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles”, Paul is to discharge his “priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (15:16, cf. Isa 66:20). In this way, Paul demonstrates his continuity with Israel’s salvation-history, while at the same time presenting a radical eschatological vision where cultic language is transformed into the noncultic activity of gospel preaching.

1 Corinthians is sometimes thought to have no argument and structure, other than Paul seeking to unify a divided church by responding to a range of issues that came to him by oral and written reports. However, Roy Ciampa and I have argued that the order of material in the letter is Paul’s own.<sup>48</sup> In 1 Corinthians 1–4, Paul insists that the proclamation of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is a call to enter the new eschatological age established in and by

<sup>47</sup> Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93.

<sup>48</sup> See Rosner and Ciampa, “The Structure and Argument.”

him. It demands that all people submit in unity to Christ, living out the wisdom of the other-person-centered lifestyle of the cross. In chapters 5–7, believers in Christ must abandon the Gentile vice of sexual immorality (to the glory of God; 6:20). In chapters 8–14 they must abandon the Gentile vice of idolatry, and give proper worship to the one true God (to the glory of God; 10:31). And in chapter 15, such Gentiles' lives are to be characterized by expectant hope for the final consummation of God's glory (and so their own glorification) in the future bodily resurrection.

That Paul's agenda and approach in his Gentile mission has affinities with Jewish moral teaching contemporary with Paul can be seen from three examples from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. In the Testament of Judah 18–19 the readers are exhorted to abstain from sexual immorality, which blinds the soul (T. Jud. 18:2, 6), from lewdness and harlotry (T. Jud. 18:2; 23:1–2), and from idols and idolatries (T. Jud. 19:1; 23:1). These exhortations are framed with a view to the resurrection unto life of the Patriarchs and martyrs, when all the people shall glorify the Lord forever (T. Jud. 25:1–5).

In the Testament of Dan 5 the readers are exhorted to speak truth with their neighbors and to live in peace, united to one another with a true heart (T. Dan 5:2–3) in order not to fall into lust. They are to be on guard against all the spirits of fornication (T. Dan 5:5–6). Finally, they are to return to the Lord and be brought into his sanctuary (T. Dan 5:9) in anticipation of the salvation and victory of the Lord when *the saints shall rest in Eden, and the righteous shall rejoice in the new Jerusalem, which shall be unto the glory of God for ever and ever* (T. Dan 5:10–13).

And in the Sibylline Oracles, Book 3 idolatry is denounced (Sib. Or. 3:35–39, 46, 741–743, 762; 4:34–35), for the sake of true temple worship (Sib. Or. 3:726–33, 746) and the great glory of God (Sib. Or. 4:37–38, 760–61). Adultery (Sib. Or. 3:46, 751), immoral widows (Sib. Or. 3:53–55) and homosexuality (Sib. Or. 3:764) are also condemned. This instruction is presented in the context of the promise of a renewed holy race that fully honors the temple of God (Sib. Or. 3:573–600).

## 5. Conclusion

Does Paul the Apostle from Israel to the Gentiles uphold his Jewish identity? Paul saw himself as a Jew who believed that Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's long-awaited Messiah, had called him to the Jewish roles of servant, prophet and priest to perform the task of heralding the gospel to the nations. He continued to hold to the central beliefs of Judaism, including the law, election and the temple, albeit in a reconfigured form. And he undertook his Gentile mission in ways that are recognizably Jewish.



# Which Paul? Whose Judaism?

## A Socio-Cognitive Approach to Paul within Judaism

*Chris Porter*

### 1. Introduction

Theological and historical edifices of Paul within Judaism<sup>1</sup> have rapidly become *de rigueur* within biblical studies, ably supported by a wide range of historical, ethnographic, philological, linguistic, and other arguments. Nevertheless, while many of these proposals consider the proper conditions and understanding of “Judaism” – variously construed as Ἰουδαῖοι, Jew, Judean, etc. – few venture an approach to Paul’s own self-understanding in the matter. Undoubtedly some of the hesitance lies within reconstructing any form of psychological understanding or internal mental state. Yet, throughout the Pauline epistles the exegete is given repeated insights into Paul’s own perception of his relationship to Judaism, not least with the controversial and difficult construction of 1 Cor 9:19–23.

Indeed, Paul’s apparently vacillating presentation of his identity in 1 Corinthians not only gives one of the strongest statements of his self-understanding, but also, on the surface, the most problematic. Therefore, this chapter will look at Paul’s proclaimed personal identity as it relates to Judaism through the heuristic lens of social identity theory (SIT) – a socio-cognitive approach to identity. Beginning with existing construals of “Judaism” we will then turn to a brief overview of SIT, before working through key passages in the Pauline corpus, culminating with 1 Cor 9.

### 2. Constructing Ἰουδαῖοι

Before we dive into Paul’s self-conception, we require some terminological clarity regarding what is meant by “Judaism.” Morphologically the category “Judaism” is most often used when translating Ἰουδαῖοι, it is particularly instructive

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<sup>1</sup> While this terminology is anachronistic it represents an apt challenge to reconstructions of Pauline self-understanding and therefore will be used in a modern sense.

for this exercise to examine some of the translations of the term and its cognates.<sup>2</sup>

As indicated the simplest translation for Ἰουδαῖοι is that of *Jew* or *Judaism* which usually imports distinct religio-cultic connotations.<sup>3</sup> This basal translation of Ἰουδαῖοι associates the term with a broader religious framing which has modern connotations, which raises distinct problems. Foremost amongst these lies within the challenge presented by a modern translation that is distinctly coloured by the events of the *Shoah*.<sup>4</sup> In response scholars such as Stephen Mason and Phillip Esler have challenged this basal translation of Ἰουδαῖοι, arguing that categories of “religion” were unknown in the Roman world, and rather the term should be translated as having reference to ethnic connotations. This preferred translation of *Judean* serves to anchor the term – and associated group – within an ethnic framework located within the land of Judah. As Esler argues this translation option links the people group with the ‘territorial relationship they had with the land of Judea and its temple.’<sup>5</sup> Indeed, this option helpfully emphasises the ethnography of language, and is often reflective of the Greek usage of the period.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the basic act of translation does serve to limit any term, and potentially introduce misunderstandings and anachronisms.<sup>7</sup> Especially with a term so loaded as Ἰουδαῖοι.

Indeed, the relationship between a social-category and the name associated with that group is more complex – even in the ancient world. Many writers use varying names when describing the same or similar social groups, as acknowledged by both Pliny the Elder and Pomponius Mela’s description of “Illyrians.”<sup>8</sup> In *Natural History* Pliny writes of them as those *proprieque dicti Illyri* or the “properly named Illyrians,” and Mela describes the same group as *sunt quos proprie Illyrios vocant* – “those who are properly called Illyrians.”<sup>9</sup> In-

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew V. Novenson, *Paul, Then and Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), 25–31 for a longer discussion than there is space for here.

<sup>3</sup> With this in mind this paper will use Ἰουδαῖος/οἱ to dissociate later connotations of Judean and Jew.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, A.J. Levine argues that shifting the translation of Ἰουδαῖοι away from this religio-cultural option runs the risk of presenting a “Jew free” text, thus running the risk of further antisemitism: “The Jew is replaced with the Judean, and thus we have a *Judenrein* (‘Jew free’) text, a text purified of Jews.” Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 160, cited in David M. Miller, “The Meaning of Ioudaios and Its Relationship to Other Group Labels in Ancient ‘Judaism,’” *Currents in Research* 9:1 (2010): 89–126, here 99.

<sup>5</sup> Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2003), 68.

<sup>6</sup> Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 63.

<sup>7</sup> Jason A. Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 20.

<sup>8</sup> Danijel Dzino, “‘Illyrians’ in Ancient Ethnographic Discourse,” *Dialogues d’histoire Ancienne* 40:2 (2014): 45–65, here 46–7.

<sup>9</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, 3.144. Pomp. Mela., *De Choriographia*, 2.56.1.

deed, while Pliny and Mela use the term Illyrian for this group, others write of them as “Liburni,” a likely term for out-group denigration.<sup>10</sup> As such, an etymological and ethnographic translation for groups, such as the Illyrians, may not be sufficient. Dzino concludes that group labels “heavily depended on the historical or political contexts where the label was used,” and that diverse context is linked to differing labels, and therefore varying group descriptions and interactions.<sup>11</sup> As Horrell observes, the same pattern can also be applied to the usage of Ἰουδαῖοι in distinguishing parts of the group from one another.<sup>12</sup> Indeed Cassius Dio argues that those “of alien race” also “affect their customs” and can therefore be given the name Ἰουδαῖοι (Ἰουδαῖοι ὀνομάδεται).<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, we need to extend past a simple translation of socio ethnic terms and consider more broadly the philology of group descriptions. Particularly instructive here is the usage of Ἰουδαϊσμός as a descriptor for the actions of a social category. Rather than examining the labelling of a group, this allows an examination of the outward interactions and group norms for the category, approaching a description from within. While often glossed as a religious term along the lines of “acting like a Jew”<sup>14</sup> the data indicates a different tenor. Mason argued that morphologically Ἰουδαϊσμός cannot simply be interpreted as “acting like a Jew,”<sup>15</sup> but rather it is “something that only non-Jews can do.”<sup>16</sup> In this morphological construction it certainly describes the actions which place one as a member of the Ἰουδαῖοι but critically applies them in an inter-group context, involving the transfer of social groups.

The transfer of social groups can be easily seen in one of the earliest uses of Ἰουδαϊσμός, at the end of LXX Esther. There the Ἰουδαῖοι take up arms against those of Haman’s conspiracy, leading to “many to circumcise and Judaize for the fear of the Ἰουδαῖοι” (πολλοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν περιετέμοντο καὶ ιουδαίζον διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ιουδαίων; LXX Esther 8:17).<sup>17</sup> Here we see both aspects at work. First, the taking on of Jewish customs – circumcision – by non-Jews, and the impetus riding upon the changing of social groups. True to the usage of -ισμός verbs, others can also transfer their group membership by practicing the customs of another social category. Hence in 2 Maccabees we find a corresponding

<sup>10</sup> Dzino, “‘Illyrians’ in Ancient Ethnographic Discourse,” 53.

<sup>11</sup> Dzino, “‘Illyrians’ in Ancient Ethnographic Discourse,” 61.

<sup>12</sup> David G. Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 273.

<sup>13</sup> Dio Cassius, *Hist. rom.* 37.17.1, Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, Hellenistic Culture and Society 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 150.

<sup>14</sup> BDAG Ἰουδαῖζω.

<sup>15</sup> Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38:4–5 (2007): 457–512, here 468.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Novenson, “Paul’s Former Occupation in Ioudaismos,” in *Galatians and Christian Theology*, ed. Mark Elliott et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 29.

<sup>17</sup> Novenson, “Paul’s Former Occupation in Ioudaismos,” 31.

threat of “Ἑλληνισμός” (Hellenizing; 2 Macc 4:10) in contrast to the group norms of Ἰουδαῖοι.<sup>18</sup>

However, the usage in Maccabees also gives rise to a somewhat challenging use of the term. As Novenson cogently observes, the use in Maccabees relates to Judah Maccabee and his party, sometimes on violent terms. This promotion of Jewish tradition does not seem to merely apply to non-Jews seeking to transfer group allegiances, but also to Jews who are perceived as being insufficiently on board with the socio-cultural program. Furthermore, as is common with social groups which feel under pressure, those who practiced Ἰουδαϊσμός sought to strongly – and sometimes violently – advocate for their cause in an already hostile environment. Therefore, Novenson concludes: “the verb ἰουδαῖζω means for non-Jews to observe Jewish customs, whereas the cognate noun Ἰουδαϊσμός means the defense and promotion of Jewish customs by Jewish people”<sup>19</sup> and it “signifies the defense under duress of Jewish ancestral traditions by certain Jews.”<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Social Identity Approach to Group Identity

From this point we have some framework for the content of belief and group membership for the category Ἰουδαῖοι, but we still require a means of applying this framework. For this we will turn to the socio-cognitive approach to group identity and self-categorisation. Indeed, the history of Social Identity Theory is also the history of a wrestling of being “within Judaism.” Before being captured on the Western front by the German blitzkrieg, Henri Tajfel was a Polish student of chemistry at the Paris Sorbonne, and more broadly an avid Francophone. Upon being captured he was mistaken as a French prisoner of war rather than a Polish Jew, a mistaken identity to which he attributed to his survival of concentration camps and the war.<sup>21</sup> For Tajfel, being “within Judaism” was not just a series of practices or self-understandings, but rather something that could be ascribed to him – in a dangerous fashion.<sup>22</sup> On the basis of this mistaken identity, Tajfel started research into group identity and prejudice, which would eventually lead to the formulation of Social Identity Theory.

While space constraints do not permit a particularly extensive dive into the theory, for our purposes an overview will suffice.<sup>23</sup> At its simplest, social iden-

<sup>18</sup> Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 466.

<sup>19</sup> Novenson, “Paul’s Former Occupation in Ioudaismos,” 33.

<sup>20</sup> Novenson, “Paul’s Former Occupation in Ioudaismos,” 34.

<sup>21</sup> Rupert Brown, *Henri Tajfel: Explorer of Identity and Difference: Explorer of Identity and Difference* (Routledge: Taylor and Francis, 2019), 32–37.

<sup>22</sup> Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1.

<sup>23</sup> A longer history of Social Identity within biblical studies can be found in Christopher

tity theory argues that cognitively we are influenced by and derive an integral part of our personal identity from the groups we are part of. Therefore, as Tajfel defined it:

[S]ocial identity will be understood as that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.<sup>24</sup>

This may be understood from a tripartite heuristic: *normative* fit, *comparative* fit, and *categorisation*. Normative fit describes the corporate understanding of group norms, beliefs, and ideals. The set of self-understandings which contribute to an understanding of the group's identity – what makes the group “us” – and allows for metrics to judge who is in the group.<sup>25</sup> Comparative fit describes the other side of the coin. While a sense of ‘us’ naturally generates a category of ‘them,’ a series of beliefs regarding the boundary between the groups is required to adequately delineate between them. Therefore, the heuristics used to compare the in-group with other groups is appropriately termed comparative fit.<sup>26</sup> Finally, categorisation describes a cognitive means of assessing these fit characteristics and assigning individuals to groups. This categorisation process derives from a broader neurological pattern of stimuli categorisation inherent within human cognition, and likely contributes to the inherent and basal nature of group assignment.<sup>27</sup> Taken together these characteristics define and maintain fuzzy sets to describe groups from the inside outwards.

However, these fit characteristics are not entirely static, as if one set of beliefs – or social identity – fits all situations. Rather the social identity that is utilised for construction, comparison, and categorisation varies depending on the social setting – or contextual salience. This process of contextually varied importance for presented identities is relatively easily recognisable, as most individuals hold a series of identity constructions that are deployed in different circumstances.<sup>28</sup> A professional identified by their workplace melds seamlessly into a football crowd upon entering a stadium, and two opposing team players rapidly take on the same social identity when playing for a national team. So too, as Tajfel experienced, a Polish Jew may be identified as a French prisoner-of-war when the social identity cues of a Francophone on the western front prioritise French-

A. Porter and Brian S. Rosner, “‘All Things to All People’: 1 Corinthians, Ethnic Flexibility, and Social Identity Theory,” *CBR* 19:3 (2021): 286–307.

<sup>24</sup> Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2.

<sup>25</sup> S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen D. Reicher, and Michael J. Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence and Power* (Hove, UK: Psychology Press, 2011), 66.

<sup>26</sup> Haslam, Reicher, and Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership*, 67.

<sup>27</sup> Penelope J. Oakes, S. Alexander Haslam, and John C. Turner, *Stereotyping and Social Reality* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1994), 95.

<sup>28</sup> S. Alexander Haslam, *Psychology in Organizations: The Social Identity Approach* (London: SAGE, 2004), 34.



ness over Polish-ness. Therefore, we must treat the process of categorisation and assessment of fit characteristics as intrinsically socially located. That the specifics of group belief which are salient in one context may be unimportant or unintelligible in another.

Along with these basal processes two further aspects also impact on our analysis. The first deals with how deviant members of groups are treated. Those who deviate from the group norms, but seek to maintain membership within the group, are often perceived as a threat to the group. Especially if their behaviour strays towards other near-group membership. Therefore, group members often denigrate – derogate – that group member more harshly than they would non-members of the group – even if doing the same thing. The degree to which this Black Sheep Effect is enacted is associated with the strength of the fit characteristics for the group – its entitativity.<sup>29</sup> Groups with stronger norms and boundaries will naturally seek to disassociate with straying members of the group so that they will not be perceived similarly.

The final heuristic comes with the means of comparison. In any system it is insufficient to simply compare between two items. Rather – for an adequate comparison – one requires three items to determine aspects of similarity and dissimilarity.<sup>30</sup> This is also the case for social groups. Within the group this is inherent in the use of prototypes and exemplars as a reference point but requires attention in historical perspective.

#### 4. Paul and “Judaism”?

With this in mind we can now turn to some examples of Paul’s description in relation to Judaism to see how he possibly understood his group identity.

##### 4.1 Acts

Although Acts is not Paul’s self-description, it provides a helpful basis for understanding some of the broader context for these discussions. In the initial instance, Paul is ascribed as a “man of Tarsus” (9:11; 21:39; 22:3), but also explicitly introduced as a Ἰουδαῖος (21:39; 22:3). Here – as seen above – the translation of Ἰουδαῖος as an ethnographic region somewhat breaks down, given that Paul’s social identity can be subsequently conflated with the specific ethnic region of Tarsus. Nevertheless, as Barclay highlights this is not an abnormal situation,

<sup>29</sup> Adam G. White, *Paul, Community, and Discipline: Establishing Boundaries and Dealing with the Disorderly*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Lanham: Lexington Books and Fortress Academic, 2021), 200.

<sup>30</sup> Formulation developed in conversation with Kenneth Mavor. Both of us recognise that we have been using the analogy for a while, but with no common origin.

with Philo being similarly identified as Ἰουδαῖος, despite being resident in Egypt.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Paul may be appropriately described as a “Diaspora Jew,” a sub-group of the broader category of Ἰουδαῖος. Furthermore, Acts not only has Paul self-identify as a Ἰουδαῖος, but also has other characters identify him in the same way. The angry slave owners of Acts 16 specifically sledge Paul and Silas by virtue of their identity as Ἰουδαῖοι.<sup>32</sup>

However, Acts also describes Paul as displaying a remarkable degree of social-category flexibility. In his defence Paul often claims a Roman identity (16:37; 22:25), along with that of his identity as Ἰουδαῖος. Indeed, Paul’s Roman identity even came through birth lineage, rather than purchase, in contrast to his interlocutor. This Paul displays no compunction as to leveraging specific social identities for rhetorical purposes. Along with that of his Roman identity, he also seeks to divide the Sanhedrin because of his claimed identity as a Pharisee (23:6). It is this degree of identity flexibility and interaction that often causes consternation for commentators, and which we shall turn to now.

#### 4.2 Galatians

Turning to Galatians, we find a series of explosive passages engaging with Ἰουδαῖοι identity. In the opening of the letter Paul writes of his “former lifestyle in Ἰουδαϊσμῷ” (1:13) and that he “advanced in Ἰουδαϊσμῷ” (1:14). While some commentators take this as a basic description of Ἰουδαῖοι group membership, we have already seen that Ἰουδαϊσμῷ can carry social content of a coercive form of Judaizing. Given that this Judaizing related to the “persecution of the gatherings of God” (1:13) it is probable that this related to those perceived to be breaking group norms, and therefore derogated as black sheep. As Novenson observes:

Virtually all Jews follow the ancestral traditions, but only a subset fight for the cause of judaization, defending the traditions even to the point of harassing other Jews whom they suspect of endangering those traditions, as both Judah Maccabee and Paul did.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, this zeal which Paul describes likely involved coercing these black sheep to return to the fold, by any means possible. In the immediate context this is contrasted with his relinquishing of coercive Judaizing by the means of “God[’s] [...] revelation of his Son to me” (1:15–16). Effectively Paul is enacting the Black Sheep Effect to derogate those members of the in-group who his group – those of the Ἰουδαϊσμῷ – perceived to abrogate the group norms.

<sup>31</sup> John M. G. Barclay, “Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?,” JSNT 18:60 (1996): 89–120, here 91; see too John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)*, Hellenistic Culture and Society 33 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 92–8.

<sup>32</sup> Novenson, *Paul, Then and Now*, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Novenson, “Paul’s Former Occupation in Ioudaismos,” 37.

However, this only gives us two points of contact in our comparison. Yet, Paul rapidly presents us with a third, and soon a fourth. As Paul's "former way of life in Judaising" is being compared with his new way of life as a "servant of Christ" (1:10) he then introduces the trips to Jerusalem to first visit Cephas and James and then the rest of the supposed pillars of the church (οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι; 2:9). In these meetings Paul introduces his third point of comparison, with the confirmation from the apparent in-group arbiters, of the group norms he is proclaiming. This third point of comparison allows for an understanding of both similarity and difference. In this case we find a difference between the "gospel" preached by Paul as Ἰουδαϊσμῷ and that which he preaches in this new way of life. This is clearly seen with in that Titus, as a gentile, was not compelled to be circumcised – despite the usage of Ἰουδαϊσμῷ in Esther indicating that this would be a reasonable option for that group. Critically this also places Paul within the norms of the new group, and not derogated as a black sheep.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, as Paul confronts Cephas in Antioch he strongly derogates him within the group in two regards. Peter as the fourth point of comparison is described as "fear[ing] those of the περιτομῆς" (2:12). The norms of which group likely align closely with that of the broader group of Ἰουδαϊσμῷ already described. In turn this leads to Cephas adopting group behaviours – drawing away from table fellowship with Gentiles (2:12) – which implicitly eschew his in-group identity.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, this identity structure is emphasised by Paul's own prior involvement with Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, thereby allowing him to concretely identify Cephas as aligning with those group norms (2:14). In this three-way comparison, Peter is not only described as dissimilar from the in-group – the basis for which is described in the content of the gospel presented to the Jerusalem στῦλοι – but also as similar to an out-group – of which Paul has intimate knowledge from his "prior life" (1:13).

By offering up this comparison Paul can begin to obliquely address the crux of the Galatian epistle: circumcision. Itself a key tenet of the Ἰουδαϊσμῷ group, as seen in LXX Esther and 2 and 4 Maccabees, it becomes one of the norms under dispute here. Therefore, Paul uses his former group identity as a means of identifying Cephas as a black sheep straying out of the fold and closer to the Ἰουδαϊσμῷ group. This derogation has two functions, first to discourage any others from following after Cephas, and secondly to call Cephas back to the group.

What then can we say of Paul? Certainly, in this case he eschews his previous group identity as Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, and instead describing himself as a messianic servant (1:10). Does this place him outside the bounds of Ἰουδαϊσμός though? Not

<sup>34</sup> White, *Paul, Community, and Discipline*, 206.

<sup>35</sup> James Crossley, "Paul within Judaism? A Response to Paula Fredriksen and John Gager," *JJMS* 5 (2018): 46–54, here 51.

necessarily. Rather, Paul goes on to describe himself as a “natural Jew” and utilises first person pronouns to do so. At least in Galatians we must conclude that Paul considers himself “within Judaism,” although not within the “coercive” stream therein.

### 4.3 *Philippians*

Following on from Paul’s self-description in Galatians, we see another example in Philippians of his self-understanding as a Ἰουδαῖος. While Paul may have stepped away from the coercive stream of Judaism in Galatians, many scholars place his self-description in Phil 3:4–9 as a declaration of his “apostasy” from Judaism.<sup>36</sup> Here we find Paul responding to those who are “the mutilation” (τὴν κατατομήν; 3:2), an oblique reference to circumcision mentioned in the following verse. As such Paul claims his “fleshly” (3:4) resume, as “Israel,” “a Benjaminite,” and a “Hebrew” (Ἰσραήλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων; 3:5) along with some socio-religious groups: “Pharisee,” “Persecutor,” and “Righteous” (κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος; 3:5–6). This series of ethnic and socio-religious groupings all form a variety of interrelated groups within the general orbit of Ἰουδαῖος. As Eyl highlights, this devolution from the generic Ἰουδαῖος to the more specific Ἰσραήλ, Βενιαμίν, and Ἑβραῖος serves to prove his “authentic membership in this more ancient ethnic group whose written stories he (re)interprets to a Gentile audience.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, at this point we should read these not as declarations separate from Ἰουδαῖος but rather as constituent components thereof.

But Paul subsequently upends the tables by “declaring all such things worthless in comparison to Christ,”<sup>38</sup> effectively declaring the comparisons null and void. Here, Paul’s strong language of σκύβαλα drives interpretations which read him as apostatizing from Ἰουδαῖος identity and creating something new. From a social identity perspective, however, this reversal is driven by the contextual salience of the normative characteristics within the narrative. Here, the “confidence in the flesh” plays a critical role in the argumentation and would seem to indicate that Paul’s eschewing of identity is related to the “dogs,” “evil workers,” and “the mutilation.”

While two of these appellations have relatively logical referents, the framing of “dogs” (κύνας; 3:2) has given some pause for exegetes. The traditional reading of this polemical epithet has located the oddity within a cultural argument – stemming from Chrysostom – that Jews often denigrated Gentiles as “dogs”

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Barclay, “Paul Among Diaspora Jews,” 113, 118.

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer Eyl, “‘I Myself Am an Israelite’: Paul, Authenticity and Authority,” JSNT 40:2 (2017): 148–68, here 155.

<sup>38</sup> Novenson, *Paul, Then and Now*, 54.

and the Philippian discourse represents an inversion of this rhetoric.<sup>39</sup> However, this near consensus appears to have little philological basis, with Nanos convincingly arguing that there is no Jewish tradition of calling Gentiles dogs in our extant literature.<sup>40</sup> Instead Nanos locates a possible alternative within “pagan” cults such as those of “Silvanus, Diana, Cerberus, Hekate, and Cybele.”<sup>41</sup> But this generates a new problem, as the socio-cognitive argument does not cohere strongly with Paul’s own “fleshly” resume. One approach to resolving this problem comes from Thiessen’s suggestion that the opponents of Philippians are “a group of rival missionaries who are actually non-Jews themselves.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, he argues, “the dog language, then, is not Paul using a Jewish slur for gentiles against Jews, but, like Mark and Matthew, using the term in reference to gentiles. In Paul’s mind, these judaizing gentiles are nothing more than dogs in sheep’s clothing.”<sup>43</sup> Drawing on identity construction this is attractive, as it provides a strong identity constrict to Paul’s self-disclosure of 3:4–9. Nevertheless, this approach may be further strengthened by the proposal from Collman, which locates the “dog” language within the usage of κύων as vulgar phallic slang.<sup>44</sup> From this usage Collman argues that “for Paul, when it comes to circumcision, its wrongful adoption by and imposition on gentiles, and the boasting therein, there is no time for pleasantries.”<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, in the broader context this pattern of out-group argument follows a similar line to that of Galatians, with Paul’s vitriol being focused on a group who are coercing Gentiles to Judaize, in a similar fashion to Paul’s own experience as Ἰουδαῖοι. Whether these “dogs” of “the mutilation” are themselves Ἰουδαῖοι or Gentile proselytes encouraging circumcision is relatively moot for Paul’s rhetorical argument. Instead, as Zoccali proposes “for Paul, the gospel arises from within Judaism, and the Christ community is itself a form of Judaism” and therefore this dispute “may represent an implicit dispute between rival Jewish factions.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Paul deploys a *qal wa-homer* argument, relativ-

<sup>39</sup> Chrysostom, *Adversus Iudaeos*, 1.2.1–2

<sup>40</sup> Mark Nanos, “Paul’s Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles ‘Dogs’ (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?,” *Biblical Interpretation* 17:4 (2009): 448–82, here 481.

<sup>41</sup> Nanos, “Paul’s Reversal,” 475.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew Thiessen, “Gentiles as Impure Animals in the Writings of Early Christ Followers,” in *Perceiving the Other in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Michel Bar-Asher Siegal, Grünstäudl Wolfgang, and Matthew Thiessen, WUNT 394 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 26.

<sup>43</sup> Thiessen, “Gentiles as Impure Animals,” 27.

<sup>44</sup> Ryan D. Collman, “Beware the Dogs! The Phallic Epithet in Phil 3.2,” *NTS* 67:1 (2021): 105–20, here 118.

<sup>45</sup> Collman, “Beware the Dogs! The Phallic Epithet in Phil 3.2,” 119.

<sup>46</sup> Christopher Zoccali, *Reading Philippians after Supersessionism: Jews, Gentiles, and Covenant Identity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 62–3.

ising his own “fleshly” resume, in order to promote the super-ordinate “in-Christ” identity (3:9) which itself is a shared-group identity.<sup>47</sup>

In this way Paul prosecutes two arguments. First, that the “dogs” of “the mutilation” should be denigrated as black sheep of the community and may be identified as such because of Paul’s own “fleshly” resume as one “circumcised on the eighth day.” These “dogs” should not be allowed to wag the community by coercing them to be circumcised as the “fleshly” confidence is considered σκύβαλα for Gentiles. Second, Paul argues that all of the “fleshly” resume for Ἰουδαῖοι is relativised in the “subordination and alteration of his ... identity to the new superordinate identity he has attained ‘in Christ.’”<sup>48</sup> This does not obviate the advantages of being Ἰουδαῖοι (Rom 3:1)<sup>49</sup> but rather places it within a broader super-ordinate category of “in Christ” with a broader set of norms and comparators.

#### 4.4 1 Corinthians

Our final piece of Pauline self-description comes with the challenging passage of 1 Corinthians 9:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. (1 Cor 9:20–23 NRSV).

In this passage Paul appears to describe a personal socio-cognitive infidelity, where his flexibility in group membership transgresses several different social categories. Indeed, some have argued that Paul’s “all things to all people” presentation highlights a form of ethnic duplicitousness in his relationship to the socio-ethnic context.<sup>50</sup> More positively other commentators have suggested this is an “adaptive mission strategy” focused on outward presentation rather than inward identity.<sup>51</sup> However, even this positive framing yields a problematically dissonant socio-cognitive identity, due to identity being found within the cognitive integration of internal understanding and external actions for normativity.

<sup>47</sup> Zoccali, *Reading Philippians after Supersessionism*, 88–9.

<sup>48</sup> Zoccali, *Reading Philippians after Supersessionism*, 104.

<sup>49</sup> Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 107.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. C. K. Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 1994), 211.

<sup>51</sup> Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 423.

Rather, I suggest that a way forward lies with further complexifying the group structures on display. Many commentators suggest that the apparent repetition of the social categories Ἰουδαίοις (9:20) and “those under the law” (τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον; 9:20) is primarily for rhetorical emphasis, so Ciampa and Rosner: “By Jews here Paul means the same thing, or nearly the same thing, as he does by those under the law.”<sup>52</sup> But rhetorically this also flattens the quadripartite distinctions between Jew and Gentile that is then suggested in the latter portion of this pericope. It is within this rhetorical concern that other commentators have sought to locate Paul’s socio-ethnic flexibility. Nanos associates this flexibility with other instances of Paul’s rhetorical adaptability, such as the conflation of Jewish and Gentile concerns in the Areopagus speech of Acts 17.<sup>53</sup> It is in this conflation of ethnic concerns that other scholars – such as Rudolph – locate Jewish ethnic identity as an overlapping set with that of the novel “in Christ” identity.<sup>54</sup> But, as Tucker notes, this leaves Paul open to charges of hypocrisy regarding Torah obedience by “becoming like one not having the law” (9:20).<sup>55</sup>

In response to these challenges, Tucker represents a helpful initial social identity approach to the text, arguing that Paul’s ethnic identity falls on a spectrum of diversity within the broad category of Ἰουδαῖος (9:20). From this perspective Paul’s Jewish identity finds its salient expression within his “in Christ” identity in a similar pattern of that of other groups finding “subgroup identity within [a] broader classification of Jews.”<sup>56</sup> Following this structure, Tucker identifies the group of “those under the law” (ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον; 9:20) as a sub-group within the super-ordinate category of Ἰουδαῖος introduced in the prior clause – more specifically identifying them as a Pharasaic sectarian group.<sup>57</sup> Indeed this sub-group approach coheres well with examinations of complex identity structures, such as that of Ἰουδαῖσμι as a sub-group of Ἰουδαῖοι, as examined earlier. Indeed, I suggest that this group may be further narrowed to a form of coercive Ἰουδαῖσμι, as Paul himself describes in Galatians. Through Paul’s embodying of salient group norms, he can diffuse through sub-group boundaries and present himself as “one-of-us” in the group.

But does this obviate the more contentious clause in this passage: that Paul apparently reneged on the law to mix with those who themselves are “ἄνομος”? Does a sub-group structure give enough flexibility to allow the giving up of key group norms? Tucker argues that Paul’s halakhic flexibility described in 1 Cor-

<sup>52</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 426.

<sup>53</sup> Mark Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy ‘to Become Everything to Everyone’ (1 Corinthians 9:19–23)” cited in J. Brian Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling: Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 94.

<sup>54</sup> David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews*, 2nd ed. (Wipf and Stock, 2016), 173.

<sup>55</sup> Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 97.

<sup>56</sup> Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 102.

<sup>57</sup> Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 104.

inthians 7 allows for such an interaction with the ἄνομος, through the caveat of being “under Christ’s law” not simply being “free from God’s law” (9:21).<sup>58</sup> Thus “Paul socially identifies with gentiles by becoming ‘as one without the Law’; however, his Jewish identity remains salient in his mission among the nations.”<sup>59</sup> “Christ’s law” in this context becomes a paradigm of “lenient halakah” – following Bockmuehl – that allows for table fellowship with the ἄνομος whilst also observing Torah.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, this suggested variegated table fellowship finds a strong parallel with the Antioch incident described in Galatians 2. Paul’s giving up of his Ἰουδαϊσμῷ identity, and constraining others to a strict halakah, leads him to adopt this same lenient halakah and maintain table fellowship in a flexible fashion.

Critically, the pattern of sub-group relations described here allows for a strong variegation in how these groups interact. As all the groups mentioned in the pericope – including the “weak” of 9:22 – are perceived as able to be sub-groups of the super-ordinate group “in Christ,” the challenge of boundary permeability is diminished. Thus, the Ἰουδαίοις, the ὑπὸ νόμον, the ἄνομος, and the ἁσθενής may all be “won” (9:21) to be sub-groups of the Christ-following super-ordinate group. Being a part of these sub-group structures does not force a relinquishment of their sub-group distinctives, especially given the strong cross-cutting ethnic identities represented in these sub-groups. As such, the group norms represented by “Christ’s law” are also secondarily applied to the other sub-groups represented. Therefore, it is in this form that Paul can write ‘I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some’ (9:22), because the comparative fit between the sub-groups is diminished by their co-membership within the shared super-ordinate group.

## 5. Social Identity and being “Within” “Judaism”

What then can we say about Paul’s understanding of what it would mean to be “within Judaism”? From a social identity perspective this understanding becomes easier as it becomes more complex. While it has long been recognised that identity structures are not necessarily mutually exclusive, the nature of normative and comparative fit for categorisation within a salience based metric assists in recognising how different identity structures interact. In modern perspective this can be seen to good effect in the re-categorisation of Jews as Bulgarians during World War II to protect Bulgarian Jewish communities and prevent their deportation.<sup>61</sup> As Reicher et al. observed many of the arguments advanced

<sup>58</sup> Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 108.

<sup>59</sup> Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 108.

<sup>60</sup> Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 112.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen Reicher et al., “Saving Bulgaria’s Jews: An Analysis of Social Identity and the



sought to blur socio-ethnic category boundaries and appealed to a complexified category construction of “Jews are *Bulgarians*.”<sup>62</sup> These arguments argued that the category of “Jew” should be incorporated within a super-ordinate category of “Bulgarian” thereby creating a subgroup of “Bulgarian Jew” and halting deportations to non-Bulgarian camps.<sup>63</sup> Elevating the salience of a super-ordinate group in this context does not eliminate sub-group categories such as “Jew,” nor the self-categorisation of individuals within those groups. Rather, in the salient context of WWII political debate, it served to generate a novel identity within a broader category. Indeed, this process of assessing identity salience within nested and competing categories is a native and common engagement. With examples easily found in politics,<sup>64</sup> transracial adoptive narratives,<sup>65</sup> and – as we have seen – ancient arguments over socio-ethnic identity.<sup>66</sup>

Returning to the question at hand, these same processes for identity salience are seen in Paul’s constructions of being “within Judaism.” From Acts we saw external records of the complexity of Paul’s social identity, encompassing both Ἰουδαῖος as well as being one from Tarsus and a Roman. Each of these deployed in different contexts for rhetorical advantage and compared with each other for similarity and dissimilarity. From Paul’s own self descriptions we gained a glimpse of his prior life as Ἰουδαῖσμός, and his eschewing of that social category to adopt the social category described as a “messianic servant” while still remaining within an understanding of Ἰουδαῖος. Similarly in Philippians we saw Paul leveraging his “fleshly” resume to argue against a coercive Judaizing – like Galatians – while remaining within Ἰουδαῖος as a sub-group of a broader “in-Christ” identity. Finally, we saw in 1 Corinthians the outcome of a salient social identity flexibility, as Paul can identify with a wide variety of sub-groups that he perceives as not mutually exclusive within the super-ordinate “in Christ” group. Just as in Galatians and Philippians, his Ἰουδαῖος identity forms one of the key sub-groups – but not the sole group – in a complex identity space.

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Mobilisation of Social Solidarity,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36:1 (2006): 49–72, here 50.

<sup>62</sup> Reicher et al., “Saving Bulgaria’s Jews,” 66 (emph. orig.).

<sup>63</sup> Reicher et al., “Saving Bulgaria’s Jews,” 69–70.

<sup>64</sup> See political debates over the nature of dual citizenship in Australian parliament: Sarah O’Brien and Law and Government Group, “Dual Citizenship, Foreign Allegiance and s.44(i) of the Australian Constitution,” *Issues Brief* Background Paper 29 (1992); *Re Canavan*; *Re Ludlam*; *Re Waters*; *Re Roberts* [No 2]; *Re Joyce*; *Re Nash*; *Re Xenophon* HCA 45, 2017, <http://www.hcourt.gov.au/assets/publications/judgment-summaries/2017/hca-45-2017-10-27.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup> Marian Quartly, Shurlee Swain, and Denise Cuthbert, *The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2013).

<sup>66</sup> As I prosecute at length in Christopher A. Porter, *Johannine Social Identity Formation after the Fall of the Jerusalem Temple: Negotiating Identity in Crisis*, BINS 194 (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

As such I suggest that if a modern exegete were to ask Paul whether he considered himself “within Judaism” we would receive a confused “yes, of course.” As we have seen in all these examples Paul considered himself Ἰουδαῖος. But this was only one part of his identity in a complex world. Clearly, he also considered himself no longer Ἰουδαῖσμι, and yet still claimed an identity as a “Pharisee” along with parallel identity structures in relating to Gentiles in a flexible halakah – like many Diaspora Jews. Is Paul then an “anomalous Jew” – à la Barclay and Bird – similarly, “of course” – as something which resists easy classification.<sup>67</sup> But this is par for the ancient course. A Ἰουδαῖος identity in the ancient world – like other socio-ethnic identities – resisted easy classification and incorporated a vast range of sub-groups. From Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, coercive Ἰουδαῖσμι, those with apocalyptic expectations, Diaspora, and Eretz – and yes, Jesus-messiah – members, the category of “Judaism” in the ancient world is complexly anomalous. Yet – simultaneously – it is this picture of first-century Judaism that we see a first-century Paul, in all his complexity.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Merriam-Webster: 1. something ... not easily classified.

<sup>68</sup> Pace Paula Fredriksen, “What Does It Mean to See Paul ‘within Judaism’?,” *JBL* 141:2 (2022): 359–80, here 380.



# “Those who were not my people”

## Paul’s Gentile Churches and the Story of Israel

*David Starling*

### 1. The Story of Israel and Paul’s Gentile Churches (Gal 6:16)

Within the closing verses of Galatians, amidst the settling dust from the urgent polemic that has occupied most of the preceding chapters, Paul pronounces an irenically-worded benediction, framed in sweeping, forward-looking language: “As for those who will follow this rule – peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of the first half of the benediction (“As for those who will follow this rule ...”) is relatively easy to discern, with “this rule” generally taken as referring back to the principle Paul has stated in the immediately preceding verse (“neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!”) and “those who will follow” embracing within its scope all those, Jewish or Gentile, among the followers of Christ who commit to shaping their conduct in accordance with it.<sup>2</sup> The benediction’s second half, however (“peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God”), has given rise to a wide variety of scholarly interpretations, implying various different construals of the relationship between Paul’s Gentile-majority churches and the story of Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Some (e.g. J. Louis Martyn and Martinus de Boer) interpret it almost entirely against the near horizon of the immediate crisis in Galatia and only indirectly, if at all, in relation to any larger story of Israel, Christ, and the Gentiles.<sup>4</sup> “The

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations are from the NRSV.

<sup>2</sup> The verb στοιχεῖω, here as in 5:25, focuses on conduct that accords to a pattern or standard (cf. Rom 4:12; Phil 3:16), and the future tense form that Paul uses here is probably intended to function as a signal of the enduring currency of the category on which Paul pronounces his benediction.

<sup>3</sup> Brief surveys of the main scholarly interpretations of Gal 6:16 can be found in Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 578–80; A. Andrew Das, *Galatians*, CC (St Louis: Concordia, 2014), 646–52; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 405–8.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 576: “When [Paul] penned Gal 6:16, he was not thinking of the Jewish people. And he was certainly not intending to distinguish a true Israel from a false

Israel of God,” according to this line of interpretation, is a self-designation of the Jerusalem church, which Paul has borrowed and uses here to refer to that church and those who identify with its present policy and practice (including, in this instance, the missionaries it has sent to Galatia). It is for the Jerusalem church and its missionaries, de Boer argues, that Paul invokes a prayer for God’s mercy, which “looks to their eventual conversion to Paul’s understanding of the gospel and indicates that the anathema of 1:6–9 is not eternal.”<sup>5</sup>

A reading of this sort has in its favor the clear and obvious way in which it relates the verse to the immediate occasioning context of the letter, resisting the temptation to leap immediately into larger, less carefully contextualized discussions regarding Paul’s view of Israel or the place of Israel in a broader biblical-theological synthesis. Counting against it, however, are the speculative nature of the hypothesis that “the Israel of God” is a self-designation of the Jerusalem church and the unlikelihood that Paul would have simply accepted without comment or criticism the legitimacy of the claim implied by it. Nor does the language in which Paul frames the benediction and the verses that immediately precede it support an interpretation that relates the verse entirely to the direct participants in the conflict between Paul, the Jerusalem church, and the missionaries it has sent to Galatia. Unlike the grace-wish that concludes the letter in v. 23, the benediction of v. 21 is framed in the third person and (in line with the universalizing language of the immediately preceding verses)<sup>6</sup> invites interpretation against a horizon somewhat wider than the immediate crisis in Galatia.

Although the word “Israel” has not previously been used within the letter, the story of Abraham’s offspring, the giving of the law of Moses, the curse that the law pronounces upon those who do not observe and obey it, and the sending of Christ to redeem those who were under the law have all been explicit topics of discussion within the arguments from Scripture that Paul has mounted across the preceding chapters.<sup>7</sup> The logic of Paul’s argument within these chapters is,

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one, in the sense that the church has now supplanted the synagogue. On the contrary, his attention was focused quite tightly on developments *within* the church” (emphasis original).

<sup>5</sup> De Boer, *Galatians*, 407–8. De Boer reads Gal 6:16 as invoking two separate blessings – a blessing of “peace” on “those who will follow this rule” and a blessing of “mercy” on “the Israel of God.”

<sup>6</sup> E.g. “never [μὴ γένοιτο] ... the world ... the world” (v. 14), “anything/everything [τί] ... new creation” (v. 15).

<sup>7</sup> De Boer’s reading of Paul’s appeals to Scripture within the preceding chapters consistently minimizes the extent to which a story of Israel is presupposed or alluded to by Paul. In his reading of 4:21–5:1, for example, he follows Martyn in arguing that the “present Jerusalem” in 4:25 represents for Paul not the nation of Israel or its present politico-religious leadership but the Jerusalem of law-observant Christianity, and that the married woman in Isa 54:1 refers in the original Isaianic context not to pre-exilic Jerusalem but to Babylon. Cf. Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul’s Quotation of Isaiah 54.1 in Galatians 4.27,” *NTS* 50 (2004): 370–89, here 371, 381. The former point is rendered unlikely by the reference in 4:29 to persecution, which is associated elsewhere in Galatians not with the actions of the Jerusalem church and its emissaries but with hostility emanating from the temple and synagogue authorities (cf. 1:13; 6:12).

at its heart, a narrative logic that seeks to persuade the Galatians by offering them a plausible reconfiguration of Israel's story, its climax in the story of Christ, and its connection to the story of their own remembered experience.<sup>8</sup> Given that context, a reference within the letter's closing verses to "the Israel of God" must necessarily be related not only to the competing claims of Paul and the counter-missionaries from Jerusalem but also to the larger stories of Israel and the Gentiles to which Paul and (presumably) the Jerusalem counter-missionaries appealed in support of their respective arguments and appeals.<sup>9</sup>

Unsurprisingly, therefore, most interpreters do relate the benediction in 6:16 to this larger, salvation-historical story, doing so (in the majority of cases) in one of two main ways. The first and most common interpretation reads Paul's invocation of a blessing on "the Israel of God" as referring to the church (including both Jews and Gentiles who have given their allegiance to Jesus as Messiah and walk by the rule Paul has laid down in the previous verse), and understands the final *καί* as exegetical in its function. On this reading Paul is taken to be pronouncing a single benediction on "those who will follow this rule," describing them in the final phrase as "even the Israel of God."<sup>10</sup>

Cf. Ernst Baasland, "Persecution: A Neglected Factor in the Letter to the Galatians," *ST* 38 (1984): 135–50. The latter point is undermined by the description of the woman in Isa 54:1c as "desolate," and elsewhere in the chapter as "forsaken," "cast off," and "abandoned" (vv. 7–8) – descriptions that imply that her present situation is to be understood in contrast with a former time when she was living with a husband. Cf. the arguments in Joel Willitts, "Isa 54,1 in Gal 4,24b–27: Reading Genesis in Light of Isaiah," *ZNW* 96 (2005): 188–210, here 194–7, for identifying the married woman in the original Isaianic context as pre-exilic Jerusalem. Whilst de Boer's reading is consistent with the interpretation implied by the Isaiah Targum (which understands the married woman in 54:1d as representing Babylon/Rome), elsewhere in the Second Temple Jewish interpretive tradition (e.g. Pss. Sol. 1:3–5, and Philo, *Praem.* 158–63) the assumption is that the same woman is being spoken of throughout the verse, and is depicted in different, successive, stages of her life.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. especially the analysis of Paul's argumentative strategy in Ian W. Scott, *Implicit Epistemology in the Letters of Paul: Story, Experience and the Spirit*, WUNT 2/205 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 159–276.

<sup>9</sup> For discussions of the role played by narrations of Israel's story (as variously constructed and alluded to by Paul and his opponents) within and behind Galatians, see N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 137–74; Bruce W. Longenecker, "Sharing in Their Spiritual Blessings? The Stories of Israel in Galatians and Romans," in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Louisville: Westminster, 2002), 58–84; Morna Hooker, "'Heirs of Abraham': The Gentiles' Role in Israel's Story," in Longenecker, *Narrative Dynamics*, 85–96; Scott, *Implicit Epistemology*, 159–276; David I. Starling, *Not My People: Gentiles as Exiles in Pauline Hermeneutics*, BZNW 184 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 23–60; A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Stories of Israel: Grand Thematic Narratives in Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Proponents of this view are numerous, and include Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations* (London: Macmillan, 1865; repr., Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 225; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 283; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 96; Ben Wither-

The alternative interpretation of v. 16 reads “the Israel of God” as referring to ethnic Israel and understands the *καί* as joining together two parallel benedictions, one on the church and the other on those to whom this phrase refers. Some of those who argue for this interpretation do so on the assumption that the fulfilment of Paul’s wish-prayer will be contingent on national/ethnic Israel’s future embrace of Jesus as Messiah,<sup>11</sup> whereas others read it as presupposing a separate path that is open for Israel to follow, under the mercy of God but without any necessity of faith in Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

Deciding between these two alternative interpretations of the intended meaning and reference of “the Israel of God” within Paul’s benediction is far from easy. In favour of the first is the vigor with which Paul, within the previous chapters of the letter, has argued for the full inclusion of uncircumcised Gentile believers among the justified people of God and the heirs of his promises. If “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything” (6:15; cf. 5:6) and the Galatian believers are “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:29), children of the (true, heavenly) restored Jerusalem (4:21–31),<sup>13</sup> then it is entirely possible that Paul might go on in the final verses of the letter to include them among the group that he speaks of as “the Israel of God,” restored and reconfigured around the Messiah, Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Given the rhetorical situation Paul is addressing in Galatians and the prominence in his readers’ minds of the immediate, presenting issue raised by the counter-missionaries’ demand that they be

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ington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 453; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 400–3; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 538–43.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief*, 5th ed., HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 417; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 275; Susan Grove Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-Reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 367–95; Bradley R. Trick, *Abrahamic Descent, Testamentary Adoption, and the Law in Galatians: Differentiating Abraham’s Sons, Seed, and Children of Promise*, NovTSup 169 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 341.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC (New York: Scribner, 1920), 358, arguing that “the Israel of God” should be taken as referring to a pious (but not Christ-believing) remnant within the nation.

<sup>13</sup> On the reading of Israel’s story that informs Paul’s assertions about his readers’ status in 4:21–31, see David I. Starling, “The Children of the Barren Woman: Galatians 4:27 and the Hermeneutics of Justification,” *JSPL* 3 (2013): 93–109, here 100–9.

<sup>14</sup> On the overlaps and distinctions between “Israel” and “Jews” within Paul’s letters and in Second Temple Judaism more broadly, see especially Jason A. Staples, “What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with ‘All Israel’? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 371–90, here 374–8, and *The Idea of “Israel” in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Jewish Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 339–48. To affirm that Paul sees Gentiles becoming inheritors of God’s promises as *Gentiles* and nowhere speaks of them as proselytes or Jews does not require us to conclude that he thereby “preserves their separation from Israel” – *contra* Caroline Johnson Hodge, “The Question of Identity: Gentiles as Gentiles – but Also Not – in Pauline Communities,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 153–173, here 164.

circumcised, a move of this sort in the letter’s final verses has an obvious fittingness. All things considered, it is probably to be preferred as the more likely account of how Paul intended his benediction to be understood by the original hearers of his letter as it was read within the assemblies of Galatia.

But (as advocates of the alternative interpretation rightly point out) the immediate question to be answered by Paul’s readers in Galatia may not necessarily have been the only question on Paul’s mind as he wrote to them. Important as it was for them to come to a right understanding of their *own* status in relation to the story of Israel, Paul can hardly have been oblivious to the importance of the related question of how they (and he) should understand the present status of (national/ethnic) *Israel* in view of God’s turn in mercy toward the Gentiles. Whilst the arguments Paul has made across the previous chapters of the letter are focused primarily on the battle he is fighting for the inclusion of the Gentiles among the people of God, it is difficult to imagine him making them without any consciousness on his part of the gravity of what was at stake for his fellow-Jews who remained outside of Christ, and for the nation of Israel collectively. Susan Grove Eastman makes the point powerfully and poignantly:

[The] typology of 4:21–5:1 is not directed against Jews per se, but against those Jewish-Christian missionaries who seek to circumcise his Gentile converts. But because its logic explicitly excludes *all* who are not in Christ from the future promised to those born according to the Spirit, it *also* implicitly excludes non-Christian Jews from that destiny.<sup>15</sup>

The pathos of this exclusion should not be lost on us. Surely Paul’s personal history and ties with his Jewish kinsfolk, now painfully strained at best, play a role in his thinking. Is it possible, as he writes to his Gentile converts that “present Jerusalem is in slavery with her children,” that the city of his ancestors and its plight do not even cross his mind? Or that, as he emphasizes his converts’ inclusion in the blessing of Abraham, the exclusion of his own kin does not cause him pain? Or that, when he warns of the disinheritance of those Gentile Christians being born “according to the flesh” through the circumcising mission, he does not also wonder about the apparent disinheritance of his own people?

## 2. Paul’s Gentile Churches and the Story of Israel (Romans 9–11)

It is to questions of this sort that Paul turns in Rom 9–11, addressing a mixed audience of Jewish and Gentile readers and pursuing an inter-related set of pastoral and apologetic purposes that include both a defence of Gentile inclusion and a rebuke of Gentile boasting.<sup>16</sup> He commences the discussion with an em-

<sup>15</sup> Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God,” 388.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the discussions of the audience and purposes of Romans in Douglas J. Moo, *The*



phatic and rhetorically prominent expression of his own personal anguish over the issue.<sup>17</sup> Paul's anguish over the situation of Israel is not only an expression of the fact that they are his "kindred" (9:3), or of his empathetic identification with their plight. It is exacerbated by the convictions that he holds regarding their identity as the covenant people of God: "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises" (9:4). The nation of Israel, according to Paul, are the people to whom the promises of God were originally given. If they are cut off, then questions arise about the trustworthiness of God himself.

For much of chapters 9–11, as Paul addresses these questions, the answer that he gives seems to hold out little hope for the majority of ethnic Israel. Paul's assertion in v. 6 that "it is not as though the word of God had failed" is supported in the immediately following verses by a reminder that "not all Israelites truly belong to Israel" (οὐ ... πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραὴλ) and "it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God but the children of the promise" (9:6, 8). A series of biblical examples follows,<sup>18</sup> illustrating this principle and affirming the freedom of God to "[have] mercy on whomever he chooses, and ... [harden] the heart of whomever he chooses" (9:18).

In 9:22–24 Paul poses a shocking rhetorical question:

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory – including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

The implication of the question is hard to miss: if it turns out in the end that national Israel was nothing more than an "[object] of wrath ... made for de-

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*Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 8–20, and (from a "Paul within Judaism" perspective) Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 59–61.

<sup>17</sup> The following paragraphs are adapted from David I. Starling, "The Yes to All God's Promises: Jesus, Israel and the Promises of God in Paul's Letters," *RTR* 71 (2012): 185–204, here 198–201.

<sup>18</sup> Paul's main mode of argument from Scripture in Rom 9 is by example or analogy, citing instances from the scriptural story of Israel in order to provide illustrations of a more general pattern ("not all Israelites truly belong to Israel"; "not the children of the flesh ... but the children of the promise"; "not by works but by his call"; "not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy") and suggest correspondences between the ways of God in the past and the claims that Paul is making about God's action in the present. Nevertheless (as Francis Watson points out) it is striking that Paul's string of citations in Romans maintains the scriptural (i.e., LXX) ordering of his texts from Genesis, Exodus, Hosea and Isaiah, suggesting that he is reading Scripture not only as a repository of general principles and illustrative types but also as a linear narrative leading (though not leading smoothly or unsurprisingly) toward Christ. Cf. Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 21; Starling, *Not My People*, 150–1.

struction," in order to serve as part of a divine plan directed toward the salvation of others, then even that would be within the rights of God the creator. After all, as Paul has just asserted, the potter has the right to make whatever he wishes out of the clay (v. 21).

The immediate impression conveyed by the verses that follow, at first reading, is that this is indeed what God has done.<sup>19</sup> Gentiles, who once were "not my people" have been called "my people" (vv. 25–26) and Israel – in a manner analogous to the judgement prophesied in Isaiah 10:22 – has been reduced to nothing more than a tattered remnant (vv. 27–29).<sup>20</sup> In the paragraphs that follow (9:30–10:21) Paul mulls over the reasons why Israel "stumbled over the stumbling stone" (9:32), concluding with a gloomy image, drawn from Isaiah, of the nation of Israel as "a disobedient and contrary people" (10:21).

But the initial impression most readers take from the rhetorical question in 9:22–24 – that God has indeed done what he has a right to do, and that national Israel's part in the story of God's salvation is over – is never explicitly confirmed by Paul. In the opening verses of chapter 11 the image of "stumbling" resurfaces and Paul turns to the question of whether Israel's rejection is final and irreversible. He puts the question twice, with deliberate repetition: "I ask, then, has God rejected his people?" (11:1); "so I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall?" (11:11). Both times, the immediate answer he gives is the same: "By no means!" (11:1, 11). But the arguments with which he supports these two emphatic denials differ.

In the first instance, within 11:1–10, his answer is a reiteration of the earlier arguments about the remnant that exists in Paul's own day: "Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened" (11:7). But the second answer, in 11:11–32 is more ambitious, pushing beyond the preservation of a remnant in the present to a larger, more audacious hope. The depiction of "jealous" Israel in vv. 11–15 draws on an image already evoked in

<sup>19</sup> On the dynamics of rhetorical suspense and potential multivalence in Rom 9:22–26, see Charles H. Cosgrove, "Rhetorical Suspense in Romans 9–11: A Study in Polyvalence and Hermeneutical Election," *JBL* 115 (1996): 271–7; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 34–83; Wayne A. Meeks, "On Trusting an Unpredictable God: A Hermeneutical Meditation on Romans 9–11," in *Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer*, ed. John T. Carroll, C. H. Cosgrove, and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 105–24.

<sup>20</sup> As a number of commentators rightly point out, the "only" in the NRSV (and most English versions of v. 27) is an interpretive addition; cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 68; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 602, John Paul Heil, "From Remnant to Seed of Hope for Israel: Romans 9:27–29," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 703–20, here 705; Shayna Sheinfeld, "Who Is the Righteous Remnant in Romans 9–11? The Concept of Remnant in Early Jewish Literature and Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Paul the Jew*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini, Carlos A. Segovia, and Cameron J. Doody (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 43. Nevertheless, it is an addition that seems justified in the light of the notes of threat and lament in the original contexts of Isa 10:22–23 and 1:9 (respectively) and the direction of Paul's thought as he moves from vv. 27–28 to v. 29 – a movement that Heil's thoroughlygoing positive translation and interpretation of vv. 27–28 fails to account for.

10:2, 19 as part of an argument for Israel's culpability. Now, however, that same jealousy is portrayed as a force through which Paul hopes that salvation will come to "some" within Israel (v. 14) – a hope flanked by even more optimistic references to the "fulness" of Israel (v. 12)<sup>21</sup> and an "acceptance" that will amount to "life from the dead" (v. 15). In support of this hope, the twin analogies of the first fruits and the batch of dough and the root and the branches in v. 16 echo the arguments from Scripture about the remnant of Israel in the preceding chapters, and now uncover their latent implications for the rest of the nation. "If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy" (v. 16).

Likewise, the olive-tree metaphor of vv. 17–24 begins by recalling the various quotations from Scripture in 9:6–11:10 concerning the judgements of God on hardened Israel and the inclusion of Gentile believers in the place they once occupied: "Branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place" (v. 17). Now, however, having spoken in chapters 9–10 about the way in which Gentiles were grafted by grace into the fulfilment of promises not originally given to them, Paul makes explicit the question of whether, by the same grace, the "natural branches" that were pruned because of unbelief could be grafted back into the fulfilment of the same promises (vv. 23–24).

In the verses that follow, the original reference of the language of the restoration-of-Israel promises (in this case, Isa 59:20; 27:9) reasserts itself emphatically. The picture Paul paints within these verses does not necessarily imply an expectation of each and every Israelite embracing salvation in (or apart from) Christ. It does, however, require the inclusion of a sufficient proportion of those who are currently "hardened" and outside the believing remnant to constitute a "fulness" of Israel (v. 12) comparable with the "fulness" of the Gentiles (v. 25), and an "acceptance" which, when compared with their current rejection, stands out as nothing less than "life from the dead" (v. 15).<sup>22</sup>

The phrase "*all* Israel" that Paul uses in v. 26 may well include the Gentiles of vv. 17–24 who were "grafted in" while the majority of Israel were hardened – Paul never specifies whether the "olive tree" into which they were grafted stands for the family of Abraham, the people of the Messiah, the enlarged and expanded Israel of the last days, or some combination of all of the above. But regardless of whether Paul's reference to "all Israel" in v. 26 is to be taken as referring to a Gentile-inclusive or exclusively Jewish community, the larger arc of his ideas

<sup>21</sup> NRSV "full inclusion."

<sup>22</sup> Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), 2:681; Moo, *Letter to the Romans*, 706–8. The οὕτως in v. 26 (if it is to be understood in its commonest sense as "thus" or "in this way"), is probably a pointer to the process by which Paul anticipates this dramatic reversal taking place – i.e., as extension and fulfilment of the hope that he has already expressed in vv. 13–14, involving the paradoxical means of the Gentile mission and the incitement of Israel to jealousy.

across vv. 11–32 clearly implies a future for ethnic Israel that includes far more than the preservation of a tiny remnant of Jewish Christ-believers within or alongside a Gentile-majority church.

In choosing the texts that he quotes in vv. 26–27, Paul seems to have deliberately selected texts that speak of Israel's salvation not as deliverance from the Gentiles but as deliverance from their own "ungodliness" and "sins," in terms that emphasize the divine initiative in bringing about Israel's final repentance. This focus prepares the way for the emphasis on "mercy" in vv. 30–32 as the key to God's mysterious workings among Israel and the Gentiles.<sup>23</sup> As Paul draws together the threads of this whole section in these verses, suggesting that "God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all" (v. 32) his language is reminiscent of the similar formulations in 5:20–21 and 3:19–24 (cf. Gal 3:22–24). Whilst so much of the energy of Rom 9–11 has been expended on the task of tracing the different paths of Israel and the Gentiles within the purposes of God, Paul's summary at the end of this section of the argument suggests not only a final convergence between the two paths but also a paradoxical symmetry, which he expresses in the complex formulations of vv. 30–31: "Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy."

Read within the context of this intricate, gradually-unfolding argument, Paul's use of the Hosea quotations in 9:25–26 regarding the mercy of God to those who are "not my people" fulfils two primary functions, both of which contribute to his overall aims in the letter.<sup>24</sup> In the first place, within the immediate purposes of the argument in 9:22–29, Paul makes use of the Hosea quotations typologically, to show the correspondence between the calling of the Gentiles in the gospel and the mercy promised to Israel when Israel's betrayal of the covenant was such that it had rendered her capable of being described as "not my people."<sup>25</sup> This first, typological, use of the Hosea texts fits within a larger hermeneutical pattern in which Paul appropriates "not ..." texts originally referring to Israel (9:30, cf. Isa 51:1; 10:20, cf. Isa 65:1) and applies them to the Gentiles,<sup>26</sup> as part of the still larger pattern within Romans in which Israel's

<sup>23</sup> The quotation from Exod 33:19 in v. 15 is the first occurrence of the verb ἐλεέω ("have mercy") and its cognates and synonyms within Romans. Subsequent instances include 9:18; 11: 30, 31, 32 (ἐλεέω); 9:16; 12:8 (ἐλεάω); 9:23; 11:31; 15:9 (ἐλεος); 12:1 (οἰκτιρμός). The verb ἐλεέω is also prominent within LXX Hos 1–2 (cf. Hos 1:6, 7; 2:3, 6, 25).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the discussion in Starling, *Not My People*, 162–5, from which following paragraphs are adapted.

<sup>25</sup> Staples goes a step further, arguing that in Paul's view the Gentiles called to belong to Christ are the seed of Ephraim, about whom the promises of Hosea were originally spoken. Cf. Staples, "All Israel," 381–3.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Paul and Isaiah "in Concert,"* NovTSup

story of sin, exile and redemption is presented as corresponding typologically or analogically with the idolatry, judgement and salvation of the Gentiles.

At the same time, within the larger argument of chapters 9–11, Paul’s use of the Hosea quotations hints at the questions that they raise for the future destiny of an Israel that is still (or once more)<sup>27</sup> in a kind of metaphorical exile that corresponds to the impending plight of the Israel to whom the promise of restoration was originally given. Given the prominence of those questions within chapters 9–11 and the way in which Paul resolves them in 11:11–32, it is most unlikely that this second function of the quotations, bound up with the original, contextual reference of Hosea’s words to the nation of Israel, is completely obliterated by the former, typological appropriation of the promises. If the only salvation for Gentile believers is through being grafted into God’s people by faith in promises originally given to a people who had been cut off for unbelief, then they have no right to boast over the branches that were cut off to make room for them, or to assume that the branches cut off as “not my people” cannot be grafted back in by the same kindness of God that was extended to them as Gentiles.

### 3. Gentile Churches, Israel’s Story, and the “Paul within Judaism” Conversation

The multiple layers of significance that Paul perceived within Israel’s story for the Gentile believers in Galatia and Rome require a complicated set of answers to the questions raised by the “Paul within Judaism” conversation that is the theme of this volume.<sup>28</sup>

Two preliminary (and equally obvious) remarks should be made at the outset. If, on the one hand, we use the word “Judaism” in the same sense as the Ἰουδαϊσμός that Paul speaks of in Galatians (i.e. a fierce and potentially violent exclusionary zeal, aimed at preserving Jews from the contaminating influence of Gentiles), then the arguments that Paul mounts in Galatians and Romans for

101 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 83, 122, 212; Douglas J. Moo, “Paul’s Universalizing Hermeneutic in Romans,” *SBJT* 11:3 (2007): 62–90, here 76.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 100–1; Wagner, *Heralds*, 30, 358.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. the surveys of the conversation and its antecedents in Magnus Zetterholm, “Paul within Judaism: The State of the Questions,” in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, 31–52; J. Brian Tucker, “Paul within or without Judaism: That is the Question,” *JBV* 36 (2015): 216–20, and the argument for a particular version of the “Paul within Judaism” approach to Paul’s letters in Magnus Zetterholm, “The Paul within Judaism Perspective,” in *Perspectives on Paul: Five Views*, ed. Scot McKnight and B.J. Oropeza (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020), 171–93.

the full inclusion of uncircumcised Gentiles within the people of God would rule out of court any attempt we might make to place him “within [that] Judaism.”<sup>29</sup> But if, on the other hand (in common with most participants in the “Paul within Judaism” conversation), the “Judaism” we have in mind is the term as it is used in modern scholarly conversation (i.e. a shorthand for the various ways in which Jews in the Second Temple period understood and practised their Jewish identity), then it is equally clear that the ethnic and ancestral identity Paul lays claim to in both letters is an explicitly Jewish one. He is, to that extent at least, undeniably “within Judaism.”

The space between the boundaries inscribed by these two truisms includes a broad expanse of possibilities, with room for a variety of competing views regarding the way in which Paul understood and practised his own Jewish identity and constructed the communal identity of Jewish and Gentile believers. The understanding of how Paul viewed the relationship between Gentile believers and the story of Israel that I have outlined within this chapter (and argued for in greater detail elsewhere) suggests the following conclusions:

(i) The invitation that Paul’s gospel extended to uncircumcised Gentiles to be justified in Christ, by faith and not by the works of the law was also extended on the same terms to his fellow-Jews (cf. Gal 2:15–16; 3:23–4:7; Rom 3:21–31). His convictions on this matter were informed not only by the Gentile-inclusive promises originally given to Abraham and the outpouring of the Spirit on Gentile believers in Christ but also by the correspondences that he perceived between Israel’s story of sin, exile and redemption and the distinct but analogous story of the idolatry, judgement and salvation of the Gentiles. Gentiles can become “my people” because Israel has first become “not my people”; the Gentiles become Christ’s not by being grafted through the law into the branches of a flourishing, obedient Israel, but by being grafted through the new covenant promises of the prophets into the stump from which the branches of disobedient Israel have been broken.

(ii) Paul’s convictions regarding the relativisation of circumcision and the full inclusion of Gentile believers in Christ make it possible, though by no means certain, that his intended meaning in Galatians 6:16 was one that included them within the scope of the “Israel of God” on which he pronounces a benediction. Similarly, in Romans 11:26, the eschatological community of “all Israel” whose salvation he looks forward to at the end of age may well be referring to an expanded and enlarged Israel that includes within its boundaries the Gentiles who have been grafted in through faith in Christ while the majority of Israel was hardened.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Lionel J. Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel: How Paul’s Jewish Identity Informs his Apostolic Ministry, with Special Reference to Romans*, BZNW 205 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 88–9.

(iii) Nevertheless, in Paul's view, the inclusion of uncircumcised Gentiles within the people of Christ (and probably also within the "Israel" he refers to in Gal 6:16 and Rom 11:26) does not mean that the future of ethnic Israel has become an irrelevance to Paul's gospel or a dead end in salvation history. Just as the disobedience of Israel has opened a door of salvation to the Gentiles, so also the mercy that God has extended to the Gentiles will one day return as salvation for Israel. In the end, as Paul narrates them, the two distinct but intertwined stories of Israel and the Gentiles converge within a single, larger story of God and his mercy to all, and it is that story (with the stories of Israel and the Gentiles nested as subplots within it) that forms the basis for the exhortations that conclude the letter in chapters 12–16.

# Paul's Segmentary Grammar of Identity

## Ex-Pagan Gentiles within Synagogues and the Importance of the Eschatological Pilgrimage Tradition

*J. Brian Tucker and Wally V. Cirafesi*

### 1. Introduction

Michael Bird has recently called interpreters “to identify the particular socioreligious location of Paul and his converts, as well as the theological texture of his argumentation.”<sup>1</sup> This essay does that by addressing three topics important to the Paul within Judaism perspective: (a) The way in which Jewish covenantal identity<sup>2</sup> continues by the use of the segmentary grammar of identity; (b) The socioreligious location of the Pauline Christ-movement within synagogue communities; and (c) The importance of the eschatological pilgrimage tradition for maintaining distinct identities for Israel and the nations. We will begin with the grammars of identity first since the presuppositions in regard to the nature of identity being formed is determinative for much of the readings seen in Paul's letters, especially Romans. Then we will offer our understanding of the institutional context of the Christ-groups as part of synagogue communities. Finally, in-Christ gentiles as members of nations closely associated with Israel, sometimes described as the commonwealth or prophetic approach underlines our approach as these gentiles are seen to participate in the eschatological drama as a member of the nations rather than as Israel.<sup>3</sup> The eschatological pilgrimage

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<sup>1</sup> Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 47.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of Jewish covenantal identity used throughout this essay follows that of Nanos: “[T]he adjective ‘Jewish’ is used both to refer to those who are Jews ethnically and to the behavior generally associated with the way that Jews live, albeit variously defined, such as by different interpretations of Scripture and related traditions, different views of who represents legitimate authority, and different conclusions about what is appropriate for any specified time and place. The behavior can be referred to by the adverb ‘jewishly,’ and as the expression of ‘jewishness.’ In colloquial terms, one who practices a Jewish way of life according to the ancestral customs of the Jews, which is also referred to as practicing ‘Judaism,’ might be called a ‘good’ Jew.” Mark D. Nanos, “Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become ‘Jews,’ But Do They Become ‘Jewish’?: Reading Romans 2:25–29 Within Judaism, Alongside Josephus,” *JJMJS* 1 (2014): 26–53, here 27–8.

<sup>3</sup> The commonwealth or prophetic model draws on Isa 11:4, and the way Ephesians presents the *ekklēsia* as a prolepsis of this. James, the Jerusalem leaders, and Paul (Acts 15:13–19;



tradition provides the rationale for why Paul thinks gentiles should not proselytize and why the Jew and gentile social categorizations remain salient for him.<sup>4</sup> The question that animates much of the research evident here is this: Does Paul think that called gentiles, those who are in-Christ and thus part of the Pauline Christ-movement, have become Israel, Israel-redefined, eschatological Israel or another Israel-like category?<sup>5</sup> While we know we cannot resolve that issue fully here we suggest giving preference to the segmentary identity grammar, seeing the institutional context for the group within synagogue settings, and recognizing the organizing role that the eschatological pilgrimage tradition plays for Paul, when combined, will prove to be probative for the Paul within Judaism perspective.

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Amos 9:11–12 MT) appear to view Israel and the nations in the messianic kingdom as a way to frame Jews and non-Jews in-Christ.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Zoccali, *Reading Philippians After Supersessionism: Jews, Gentiles, and Covenant Identity*, NTAS 10 (Eugene: Cascade, 2017), 35–44, for a defense of the salience of this tradition for Paul and Anders Runesson, “Placing Paul: Institutional Structures and Theological Strategy in the World of the Early Christ-Believers,” *SEÅ* 80 (2015): 43–57, for the way the institutional context provided the need for this sort of theologizing.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 708, sees “gentiles as eschatologically restored Israelites.” Michael F. Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission*, LNTS 331 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2006), 68, thinks that “Gentiles [...] participate in the eschatological Israel.” Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 247, argues “Gentiles ‘in Christ’ [...] share in righteousness and salvation by becoming full members of a redefined Israel.” George Lindbeck, “Performing the Faith: An Interview with George Lindbeck,” *The Christian Century* 123 (28th November 2006), 28–35, 29, suggests “Israel-like.” William S. Campbell, “Unity and Diversity in the Church: Transformed Identities and the Peace of Christ in Ephesians,” in *Unity and Diversity in Christ: Interpreting Paul in Context: Collected Essays*, ed. William S. Campbell (Eugene: Cascade, 2013), 129, 144, offers “co-heirs as gentiles with Israel” or “fellow-citizens with Israelites.” David J. Rudolph, “Describing the Church in Relation to Israel: The Language of George Lindbeck and Ephesians 2–3” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SBL, San Diego, CA, 23th November 2019), 1–19, here 18, suggests “multinational extension of Israel.” J. Brian Tucker, “The Continuation of Gentile Identity in Ephesians” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, San Francisco, CA, November 2011), 1–20, here 10–11, similarly thinks, in light of Eph 2, “co-citizens of the ‘commonwealth of Israel,’ without becoming Israel.” This represents the presupposition pool for the arguments evident in this essay. Gentiles in-Christ do not become Jews or Israel; however, as members of the commonwealth of Israel they are an extension of Israel since this language avoids the implication of replacement or supersessionism, following Rudolph above. On gentiles as exiles and part of Israel’s story see David I. Starling, *Not My People: Gentiles as Exiles in Pauline Hermeneutics*, BZNW 184 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011) and on whether Israelite and Jew should be seen as synonymous see Jason A. Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

## 2. The Three Grammars of Identity

Readings of Paul's letters in regard to Israel and the *ekklēsia* tend to crystallize contemporary Christian identity in ways that are often dehistoricized and theologically-bound. These letters respond to their context, and thus some qualification is in order as to the nature of the group identity Paul seeks to instantiate. Paul's literary performance is a contested site over differing truth claims and the nature of the empowerment the gospel brings. In order to assess more clearly the relationship between Israel and the *ekklēsia* in regard to the type of identity and the nature of the empowerment evident in his letters, the work of Gerd Baumann and André Gingrich will be used to guide our research. In their 2004 work, *Grammars of Identity/Alterity*, they identify three overlapping grammars that aid in the construction of identity and difference: orientalization, segmentation, and encompassment.<sup>6</sup> The suggestion at this point is that these grammars are either intentionally or unintentionally used by NT scholars and contribute to their conceptualization of Paul's gentile Christ groups as either within, without, or somewhere in-between local expressions of a Jewish pattern of life.

### 2.1 *Israel and the Church: Us versus Them*

"Orientalization" relies on the resources of binary thinking in order to construct a sense of self and other so that the two are seen as mirror images of one another. So, that which constitutes the self would be seen as good while that which identifies the other would be understood as bad. This dualism constructs two oppositional groups: it is "us" versus "them." Baumann and Gingrich expand on the original binary logic found in Edward Said by arguing this mirror image is more complex (and thus ternary): "what is good in us is lacking in them," but it also adds a subordinate reversal: "what is lacking in us is (still) present in them."<sup>7</sup> The way in which Jew and gentile may be described by Paul in Romans as positive and negative images of each other is an example of this orientalizing grammar.<sup>8</sup> This occurs in places where Paul points out differences

<sup>6</sup> Gerd Baumann and André Gingrich, "Forward," in *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach*, ed. Gerd Baumann and André Gingrich, EASAS 3 (New York: Berg-hahn, 2004), ix–xiv, here x.

<sup>7</sup> Baumann and Gingrich, "Forward," x.

<sup>8</sup> See also Christopher D. Stanley, "Paul the Ethnic Hybrid? Postcolonial Perspectives on Paul's Ethnic Categorizations," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 110–26, here 125, who thinks Paul completely orientalizes gentile identity in Romans, a view we question (i.e., while 1:18–32 others gentiles, 2:14–16, shows this is not completely so). Among contemporary interpreters, orientalizing, as appropriated by Baumann and Gingrich is seen primarily in viewing Paul as a binary thinker. Cf. Ben C. Dunson, *Individual and Community in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, WUNT 2/332 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 129 n. 74, who accepts this perspective

between the group he belongs to (i.e., the remnant 11:5) and the group he does not (i.e., the disobedient 11:30). He sees his own group as superior but also romanticizes the other group (they too receive mercy, 11:31; and continue to have advantages, 3:1).

## 2.2 *Israel and the Church: Foes but also Allies Extending Israel*

“Segmentation” is a situationally specific and sliding hierarchy of the self and other that relies on processes such as “fusions and fissions.”<sup>9</sup> Building on the work of Evans-Pritchard, the other may be my foe at a lower level of abstraction but at the same time my ally at a higher level of segmentation. Paul’s view of Israel’s continued covenantal identity may be an example of segmentary logic. At one level he views some of his relations as “enemies of the gospel” (11:28) while still at another level maintaining that God has not “rejected his people” (11:1), that their covenantal identity continues even after the coming of Christ (9:4–5) and then eventually “all Israel will be saved” (11:26). What is Paul doing? In terms of segmentary logic he is asking his gentile auditors, in spite of the apparent rejection of some first-century Jews, not to consider Jewish identity in opposition to but as part of a newly integrated community based on God’s mercy poured out to all, both Jews as Jews and non-Jews as non-Jews (11:32). This social grammar seeks to retain the salience of individual indexes of identity. Segmentation is the most overlooked grammar among traditional interpreters of Paul, who hold to a theologically bound Christian identity as contrasted with an open one.<sup>10</sup> It is the one that informs more explicitly the arguments in this essay.

## 2.3 *Israel and the Church: Absorption into*

“Encompassment,” which comes from the work of Dumont, classifies personal identity and that of the other via the logic of “sub-inclusion.”<sup>11</sup> Here the other is appropriated or co-opted. The larger group identity subsumes those underneath it. It relies on the logic of synecdoche in which a part can be used to signify the whole but unlike segmentation, encompassment is non-dialogical.<sup>12</sup> All forms of difference at the lower level must be able to be absorbed/erased at the higher

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and Kathy Ehrensperger, “Scriptural Reasoning – The Dynamic that Informed Paul’s Theologizing,” *IBS* 26:1 (2004): 32–52, who rejects it.

<sup>9</sup> Baumann and Gingrich, “Forward,” x.

<sup>10</sup> One interpreter who has explicitly used Baumann and Gingrich is Robert L. Brawley, *Luke: A Social Identity Commentary*, SICNT 3 (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 38–9.

<sup>11</sup> Baumann and Gingrich, “Forward,” x–xi.

<sup>12</sup> Adriana Ramirez de Arellano, “Voice and Identity in Legal Narratives of Gender Violence and Sexual Torture in the Southwestern United States” (PhD diss., The University of New Mexico, 2008), 62, while critiquing Baumann and Gingrich on the nature of this grammar offers the following “example of the synecdochical logic of encompassment ... the cate-

level or they must be rejected as foreign. This grammar is sometimes seen in the way Paul defines Jewish identity, e.g., in 2:25–3:2 where he putatively replaces it, or in 9:6 where he writes “for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel,” or finally in 11:7 he describes “the rest” who “were hardened.”<sup>13</sup> The logic of encompassment here seems to be that all those “beloved of God” in Rome do not include non-Christ-following Jews (1:7) or at least in Christ gentiles have become Israel. This social grammar seeks to align its rhetorical targets under one transcending and monolithic identity.

These identity grammars are not new; they were developed earlier in the works of Said, Evans-Pritchard, and Dumont.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that the historical particularly of each of these theorists' work is removed by Baumann and Gingrich so that what remains is a barebones theoretical structure. However, this likely make their model more appropriate when applying them to Pauline texts. Adriana Ramirez de Arellano highlights three other aspects of their work that make it particularly useful for discerning the identity formation occurring in a text. First, Baumann and Gingrich understand these three grammars as having both cognitive and normative aspects to them. They are not merely descriptive.<sup>15</sup> Second, these grammars all involve empowerment though with differing social implications.<sup>16</sup> Third, these grammars can exist within the rhetorical resources of a single author.<sup>17</sup> It is likely that all three of these grammars are functioning within Romans. This may in part account for the divergent interpretations of the letter.<sup>18</sup> An interpreter discerns an encompassment or orientaling discourse in a portion of the letter and then reads the rest of it in light of that discourse. However, this may produce a strained understanding, especially if the segmentary logic is overlooked because of the rhetorical effect of the binary or non-dialogical aspects. If such is the case, then what results is a Christ-move-ment identity that is not fully textually determined. What is needed is a broad awareness of all three of these grammars and then they can each be discerned

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gory ‘man’ stands as the counterpart of the category ‘woman’ at a lower taxonomical level, while it can simultaneously stand for ‘humanity’ at the higher taxonomical level of the whole.”

<sup>13</sup> J. Brian Tucker, *Reading Romans after Supersessionism: The Continuation of Jewish Covenant Identity*, NTAS 6 (Eugene: Cascade, 2018), 131–5, 150–1. In regard to those verses we take on the issue of whether Paul has divided Israel's historic covenantal identity.

<sup>14</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> Gerd Baumann and André Gingrich, “Debating Grammars: Arguments and Prospects,” in *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach*, ed. Gerd Baumann and André Gingrich (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 192–203, here 198.

<sup>16</sup> Baumann and Gingrich, “Debating,” 194.

<sup>17</sup> de Arellano, “Voice and Identity,” 63.

<sup>18</sup> See the essays on this in Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, eds., *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations*, RTHC (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2000).

within the relationships Paul is addressing in order to determine more precisely the nature of the identity being formed in Romans and whether it is, using Michael Bird's classification, "Paul *contra* Judaism" or "Paul *intra* Judaism."<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Segmentary rather than Orientalizing or Encompassment in Romans

Here we would like to focus on the identity hermeneutic that is presupposed in certain readings of Romans and suggest that the segmentary grammar can lead to a different understanding of Paul's relationship to Judaism.<sup>20</sup> In Romans, Paul generally leaves behind the orientalist grammar with its absolute distinction between "them" and "us" as well as the grammar of encompassment with its demand to "become like us or get out of here." These two grammars are the predominant ones used traditionally for understanding Paul but it is more likely that Paul is primarily a segmentary grammarian. Paul's thinking aligns more with this grammar rather than encompassment or orientalization because he holds to the expectation for the continuation of difference within the Christ-movement (Rom 14:5; 15:7; see also 1 Cor 7:20). By contrast, encompassment grammar results in the exclusion of difference (as the new movement enfolds the old/existing one). Thus, any identity that cannot be encompassed would have to be regarded as a threat.

In Romans, the threat is all too often seen as Jewish identity as reinforced by "the synagogue." This results in the formation of a Christ-movement identity that is in opposition to Judaism as a whole. Francis Watson is illustrative of this general approach: "It is argued here that Paul *advocates a 'sectarian' separation between the Christian community and 'Judaism', rather than an inclusive understanding of the one people of God as encompassing even uncircumcised Gentiles.*"<sup>21</sup> The grammar of encompassment evident in this reading of Paul's arguments in Romans is based on orientalist assumptions in Watson's work. The Christ-movement identity in this letter must be understood as an "us" versus "them" one. In reflecting on his earlier arguments Watson restates his claim: "[t]he social reality which underlies Paul's discussions of Judaism and the law is his creation of Gentile Christian communities in sharp separation from the Jewish community."<sup>22</sup> Paul is seen as one promoting an ideology of separation and

<sup>19</sup> Bird, *Anomalous*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> For a definition of post-supersessionism see Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 4 n. 11. Lionel J. Windsor, *Reading Ephesians and Colossians after Supersessionism: Christ's Mission through Israel to the Nations*, NTAS 11 (Eugene: Cascade, 2017), 21, raises important Christological concerns related to the degree one might embrace the Paul within Judaism approach.

<sup>21</sup> Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 21, emphasis original.

<sup>22</sup> Watson, *Paul*, 21; citing page 19 in the 1986 edition of this book. Windsor, *Paul*, 39

offering a reading of Israel's scriptures for the purpose of legitimating their separate existence. Notice Watson's explicit orientalist argumentation: "this separation in the form of an ongoing argument about scriptural interpretation, an attempt to show that the true sense of scripture – the one that attests to the truth of the gospel – belongs to 'us' rather than 'them'."<sup>23</sup> We are not arguing that there is no evidence of encompassment or orientalist thinking in Romans, as some of that was highlighted above; it is just that the segmentary grammar is too often ignored or downplayed. The usefulness of Baumann and Gingrich is clear here: all three of these grammars overlap and are used in the formation of identity and difference. It seems to us that Paul's arguments move more in the direction of the segmentary grammar rather than the encompassment or oriental ones since he expects the continuation of difference within the Christ-movement in Rome. Since this is crucial to our claim, we'll briefly highlight how this might work in Romans.<sup>24</sup>

The segmentary grammar is dialogical and is a move away from encompassment which is monological. It works best in settings where shifting and intersecting identifications are evident. Rom 14–15 is just such a case.<sup>25</sup> Here the discussion over table fellowship is punctuated not by an "us" versus "them" mentality but one in which the continuation of difference is expected. In 14:5 Paul writes: "Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds." Further, the expectation of different social practices is evident when Paul connects "faith" to them as well as the even more foundational instruction to "accept" one another (14:1, 23; 15:1, 7). William S. Campbell and Philip Esler are interpreters who, in contrast to Watson, recognize the predominance of the segmentary grammar. Esler points out that one would expect Paul not to tolerate Torah-based social practices in Rom 14–15 based on his earlier statements concerning the Mosaic law while Campbell rightly questions even the idea that Paul disparaged the Mosaic law.<sup>26</sup> However, that is not what Paul does; rather in these chapters Paul

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n. 110, thinks interpreters (e.g., Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 132) have misunderstood the trajectory of Watson's argument in regard to the continuation of Jewish identity. He points out that Watson thinks Paul wants his Jewish auditors to find their identity in a place other than the synagogue. See Watson, *Paul*, 202–5.

<sup>23</sup> Watson, *Paul*, 21–2.

<sup>24</sup> Rom 2:24–28 (see below); 4:11b–12; 9:24–26 are three other passages that a segmentary grammar is operative. These are discussed extensively in Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 47–56, 62–84, 139–47.

<sup>25</sup> These chapters play an important part in the argument of Lampe in terms of separation from the synagogue. Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. Michael Steinhauser (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 15. For a different reading of Claudius's edict and the way it is misused to suggest the gentiles are no longer part of the synagogue see Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 14–9.

<sup>26</sup> William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, LNTS 322 (London:

acknowledges the continuation of difference at the subgroup level while seeking to maintain unity at the higher level of social practice.<sup>27</sup> This is classic segmentary grammar and represents a move away from the predominant influence of encompassment or orientalizing logic often seen in Rom 14–15. Paul seeks to form an identity for the gentile Roman Christ-followers that embraces existing ethnic or social identities rather than extinguishing these, or at least a shifting away from existing institutional contexts, as is evident in Watson's approach.<sup>28</sup>

The reliance on encompassment and orientalizing grammars to the exclusion of the segmentary one is also evident in the work of N. T. Wright. For Wright, the identity that Paul seeks to form in Romans is one in which Israel's covenantal identity has been redefined. The use of identity redefinition in this manner is a classic encompassment grammatical move. What we see in Wright is the subsumption of Jewish flesh into a new/third entity Christianity.<sup>29</sup> Israel's identity is appropriated and co-opted by Paul; its "story had been [...] reconfigured by the cross and resurrection,"<sup>30</sup> as "Israel's history" is "brought to its climax [...] through the Messiah."<sup>31</sup> In the larger context of these quotations, the suggestion is that Israel's identity has been absorbed into the Messiah's identity and by extension those who are found in him are in effect Israel. The polysemy of the term Israel is evident in the way he handles its presence in Rom 11:25–26: "Israel in verse 25 consists of the whole people of God, within which many Jews are presently 'hardened' but into which many Gentiles are being incorporated, so 'all Israel' in v. 26 must reflect that double existence."<sup>32</sup> However, it is unlikely that Paul changes the referent to anyone other than historic Israel here since it is referred to also in 11:23 and in the contrast seen in 11:30–32.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Wright, like Watson, relies on the grammar of encompassment when it is more likely

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T&T Clark, 2006), 116. Paul and the Mosaic Torah is a topic too big to cover here but we think that Paul also uses the segmentary grammar when applying his teaching to the law. It functions differently for Jews and non-Jews, while neither are "under law" it does not follow that this means that Torah has no claims on the life of either group. See Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 87–113. Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, NSBT 31 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), provides the most even-handed approach to this topic.

<sup>27</sup> Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 364–5, "Paul does not tell the Judean members of the Christ-movement to stop being Judeans. He does not ask them to sever any ties that they may have with the Roman synagogues, and he is tolerant of their continued practice of the Mosaic law, at least in regard to provisions relating to food, wine, and holy days."

<sup>28</sup> See Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 132; Watson, *Paul*, 181 n. 51.

<sup>29</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 173–5.

<sup>30</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 416.

<sup>31</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, NIB 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 747.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 1244.

<sup>33</sup> Michael G. Vanlaningham, *Christ, The Savior of Israel: An Evaluation of the Dual Covenant and Sonderweg Interpretations of Paul's Letters*, EDIS 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2012), 215.



that the grammar of segmentation is being used. This would suggest that for Jews, Israel still maintains its salience as a possible future social identity within the family of God.

Seeing a continuation of Israel's covenantal identity rather than the putative subsumption Wright uncovers would suggest the following interpretive improvements in Romans. First, it would support the traditional eschatological miracle view in 11:25–26 which in turn provides a basis for the continuation of Israel's identity. Second, the citation of Deut 32:43 in Rom 15:10: "And again he [the Davidic Messiah] says: Rejoice, O the nations, with his people," shows the continuation of Israel's identity, especially with the final phrase "with his people." The citation is identical to what is found in the LXX and describes a directive in which the nations are now to worship *with* Israel (not instead of Israel) as encompassment logic would demand.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, performative celebrations such as this actually work against the logic of encompassment; thus segmentary grammar seems more relevant. The gentile audience would thus be reminded in Romans that God is still at work among the people of Israel, and Wright's perspective that Israel's identity has been taken up in Christ to the extent that its unique covenantal identity and history has been resolved into the life of the new covenant community should be called into question (15:8). Paul's solution to the problem he began to address in Rom 14:1 concerning the weak and the strong is not to seek to encompass, to orientalize, or to remove the identity of one group or the other; rather, he casts a vision for a doxological identity (a future, possible, social identity) in which the nations of the world are worshipping together with Israel. This vision, at the same time, subverts the pretentious claims of the Roman empire (the more likely outgroup in this letter) who had claimed they had unified the disparate peoples of the world for Rome's eternal glory (Vergil, *Aen.* 1.371–375). So, Romans is read differently depending on the presuppositions of the interpreter; both Watson and Wright's identity hermeneutical framework led them to weigh the data differently than we did; Baumann and Gingrich's work is helpful in categorizing these differences.<sup>35</sup> Also, as we will argue in the next section, the segmentary grammar is more

<sup>34</sup> See Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 452. Cf. Joshua W. Jipp, *Christ Is King: Paul's Royal Ideology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 4–16.

<sup>35</sup> Though we would suggest using Baumann and Gingrich can expose the undue influence of hidden presuppositions, see further Andrew D. Clarke and J. Brian Tucker, "Social History and Social Theory in the Study of Social Identity," in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 41–58, here 43–9, on this. Of course, this includes paying attention to our own presuppositions as was recently pointed out by Nina Nikki, "Was Paul Tolerant? An Assessment of William S. Campbell's and J. Brian Tucker's 'Particularistic' Paul" in *Tolerance, Intolerance, and Recognition in Early Christianity and Early Judaism*, ed. Outi Lehtipuu and Michael Labahn (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 113–38.



historically appropriate for this early period, in contrast to the often used orientaling or encompassment grammars, since Paul probably expected his gentile Christ-followers to remain attached to local synagogue communities and thus exist within Judaism. Third, the recognition that gentiles are the intended audience for Romans provides a more narrow and concrete identity-forming project for Paul's writing (11:13); rather than seeking to transform Jewish identity in general, he is seeking to transform gentile identity but not in a way in which their existing identity is obliterated, since they, as members of the *ekklēsia*, are eschatological gentile actors on Israel's stage (15:8, 10). For Paul, Jewish and gentile identities continue to remain salient even after the coming of Israel's Messiah. Thus, we would suggest interpreters consider allowing the segmentary identity grammar to find an increasing place in the construal of the type of identity envisioned in Paul's letters generally and in Romans specifically.

#### 4. Ex-Pagan Gentiles Going to Synagogue

In our continuing desire to answer Bird's question concerning the socioreligious context of Paul and the Christ-movement, we might frame our understanding of this location by asking the question: Did Paul expect his gentile Christ-followers to "go to synagogue" or to "go to church"?<sup>36</sup> Our answer to this question will likely depend on whether we conceive of the relationship between Paul and Israel as "contra Judaism" or "intra Judaism."<sup>37</sup> Bird, in detailing Israel's problem in relation to ethnocentrism clarifies the Paul against Judaism perspective, "Paul established Christian communities separate from Judaism and resisted attempts at bringing them into closer socioreligious proximity to Judaism."<sup>38</sup> The work of Francis Watson in *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, as we just saw, is one example of this approach. The Paul within Judaism perspective, on the other hand, frames the issue of ethnocentrism this way, according to Bird, "Paul believed that the eschaton had dawned in Jesus' resurrection and that Jesus had become the way for Gentiles to enter into Israel without having to actually become Jews themselves; Israel must accordingly accept this

<sup>36</sup> We take for granted the work done by Ralph J. Korner, "Ekklēsia as a Jewish Synagogue Term: Some Implications for Paul's Socio-Religious Location," *JJMJS* 2 (2015): 53–78, that establishes that *ekklēsia* is a Jewish synagogue term. See further Ralph J. Korner, *The Origin and Meaning of Ekklēsia in the Early Jesus Movement*, *AJEC* 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 81–149. The question is which segment of the synagogue community, thus the usefulness of thinking through this with the segmentary identity grammar.

<sup>37</sup> Bird, *Anomalous*, 45. And Paul's identity as well, see Jörg Frey, "Paul's Jewish Identity," in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World. Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt*, ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripentrog, *AJEC* 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 285–321.

<sup>38</sup> Bird, *Anomalous*, 45.

fact.”<sup>39</sup> The work of William S. Campbell in *The Nations in the Divine Economy*, is one example of this perspective.<sup>40</sup> Bird positions himself between the two perspectives, one that “straddles the ‘contra’ and ‘intra’ Judaism fence,” agreeing that “Paul never intended to set up a new religious entity” while recognizing that his arguments “lower the currency of Israel’s election through the inclusion of Gentiles as part of the ‘Israel of God.’”<sup>41</sup> Bird then is a good example of the both/and approach found among scholars today; he is a sort of bridge between the “contra” and “intra” perspectives. While we cannot address even a significant number of the exegetical debates that scholars put forward in support of their position, we would like to, in this second section of the essay, revisit the “contra” and “intra” perspective via insights drawn from the sociohistorical world of ancient synagogue studies.<sup>42</sup>

Scholars such as Paula Fredriksen, Mark Nanos, and Kathy Ehrensperger have argued and established that “synagogues” were the socioreligious space from which Paul recruited gentiles variously associated with the God of Israel to the Christ-movement.<sup>43</sup> This view should not be taken for granted, since some working in the Paul within Judaism paradigm have interpreted the category of “gentiles” as those “outside the synagogue” and, conversely, “synagogue” as a category only for Jews.<sup>44</sup> But Fredriksen, Nanos, and Ehrensperger’s arguments do seem to make the best sense not only of Paul’s use of Jewish tradition in addressing an exclusively gentile audience in his letters but also of the evi-

<sup>39</sup> Bird, *Anomalous*, 45.

<sup>40</sup> For a summary of Campbell’s approach see J. Brian Tucker, “Diverse Identities in Christ according to Paul: The Enduring Influence of the Work of William S. Campbell,” *JBV Special Edition: Festschrift for William S. Campbell* 38:2 (2017): 1–14.

<sup>41</sup> Bird, *Anomalous*, 46. We apply the segmentary grammar, distinguishing between salvation and vocation.

<sup>42</sup> An approach that has begun to penetrate Pauline studies, e.g., Richard Last, *The Pauline Church and the Corinthian Ekklēsia: Greco-Roman Associations in Comparative Context*, SNTSMS 164 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996). Paula Fredriksen, *Paul the Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 14–9; J. Brian Tucker, *Reading 1 Corinthians*, Cascade Companions (Eugene: Cascade, 2017), 4. Magnus Zetterholm, “A Covenant for Gentiles? Covenantal Nomism and the Incident at Antioch,” in *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins until 200 C.E.: Papers Presented at an International Conference at Lund University October 14–17, 2001*, ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), 168–88.

<sup>43</sup> Fredriksen, *Paul*, 54–60, 204–6; Nanos, *Mystery*, 30–2; Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures: Theologizing in the Space-Between*, LNTS 456 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 130–1.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 12. Examples of scholars not working within the Paul within Judaism paradigm who follow this line of thought include: Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 80–1.

dence from Acts, which portrays Paul in “synagogues” recruiting both Jews and non-Jews (Acts 14:1; 17:4, 12; 18:4). So, in light of what we know about the participation of non-Jews in “synagogues,” the question is whether Paul expected his gentile Christ-followers to *continue* attending assemblies in which non-Christ-following Jews were present. If we answer “yes” to this question, then it would suggest an “intra” socioreligious context for the Pauline Christ-movement.

One problem we must address, however, is the tendency in some scholarship to speak about a phenomenon called “*the* synagogue” in antiquity, as if there was a monolithic religious institution that exercised supra-local authority over all Jews everywhere. Concomitant with this tendency is the notion of a monolithic “Judaism,” with the concept of “the synagogue” functioning, then, as a synecdoche for “Judaism” as a whole. This synecdochizing language is found especially in Johannine studies,<sup>45</sup> but it appears in Pauline studies as well.<sup>46</sup> Even behind the better phrasing “the synagogues” there often stands the notion that synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world were somehow uniform, in both ideology and social organization.<sup>47</sup> Scholarship over the past several decades has come a long way to appreciate the variegated nature of Jewishness in antiquity, and it is now time, we suggest, to appreciate equally the variegated nature of “synagogues.” One of the major developments in recent historical scholarship on ancient synagogues has been to complicate and variegate “the synagogue” as an analytical category. One model of “synagogues” growing in popularity among historians is the theory that “synagogues” in and around the first century seem to have existed generally as two types of institutions and were identified by a range of terms.

<sup>45</sup> See Wally V. Cirafesi, *John within Judaism: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Shaping of Jesus-Oriented Jewishness in the Fourth Gospel*, AJEC 112 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 269–77, for a discussion of this tendency within Johannine studies. Christopher A. Porter, *Johannine Social Identity Formation after the Fall of the Jerusalem Temple: Negotiating Identity in Crisis*, BIS 194 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 230–2, navigates this by seeing *Ioudaioi* as a subgroup of superordinate Judaism, which is inclusive of Jewish Christ-followers. Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed. NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 30–50. Thanks to Chris Porter for pointing out this reference.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Delio DelRio’s work, titled *Paul and the Synagogue*, contains no study of actual synagogues. Delio DelRio, *Paul and the Synagogue: Romans and the Isaiah Targum* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., Karl O. Sandnes, *Paul Perceived: An Interactionist Perspective on Paul and the Law*, WUNT 412 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 173–4, where the concept of “the synagogues” seems to represent, for Sandnes, a supra-local standardizing authority; so, “Paul submitting to the authority of the synagogues,” Paul being “persecuted by the synagogues,” as if “the synagogues” everywhere held such authority.

## 5. Public/Civic Synagogues

On the one hand was a type of “synagogue” of a local-civic nature. As scholars such as Anders Runesson and Jordan Ryan have argued, “synagogues” of the public/civic type could only exist in places where Jews had control of local public administration, i.e., the land of Israel.<sup>48</sup> This type of local-official “synagogue” was the meeting space and the meeting itself of the popular assembly in any Jewish town or village. Public synagogues operated as contexts for a variety of administrative and socio-religious activities, such as adjudication on legal matters,<sup>49</sup> execution of punitive sentences like floggings,<sup>50</sup> Torah reading and its interpretation,<sup>51</sup> and political disputes.<sup>52</sup> They also functioned as town treasuries and libraries, and, if one agrees that the term *proseuchē* – prayer hall – has at least some kind of relation to the activities performed within the building, they were places of prayer.<sup>53</sup> They were led by a variety of public officials, such as town elders, archons and *archisynagogoι*, village scribes, and even priests.<sup>54</sup> But ultimately, these civic synagogues were controlled, not by any supra-local authority, but by the people of a village, the town masses, which sources from Josephus, the Mishnah, and the Gospels seem to indicate.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Anders Runesson, “Synagogues without Rabbis or Christians? Ancient Institutions beyond Normative Discourses,” *JBV Special Edition: Festschrift for William S. Campbell* 38:2 (2017): 159–72, here 164. Jordan J. Ryan, *The Role of the Synagogue in the Aims of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 14.

<sup>49</sup> For citations here and below see Anders Runesson and Wally V. Cirafesi, “Reassessing the Impact of 70 CE on the Origins and Development of Palestinian Synagogues,” in *The Synagogue in Ancient Palestine: Current Issues and Emerging Trends*, ed. Rick Bonnie, Raimo Hakola, and Ulla Tervahauta, FRLANT 279 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 37–57. See also LXX Sus 28.

<sup>50</sup> Matt 10:17; Mark 13:9; m. Mak. 3:1–4, 9–15.

<sup>51</sup> Luke 4:16–31; John 6:59; m. Meg. 21b:8. See Wally V. Cirafesi, “Imagining the Everyday Life of Jewish and Christian ‘Neighbors’ in Late Antique Capernaum: Beyond Church and Synagogue – and Back Again,” in *The Ambiguous Figure of the Neighbor in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Texts and Receptions*, ed. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, ISJCITR (New York: Routledge, 2022), 189–212, here 189, 202.

<sup>52</sup> Josephus, *Vita* 277–303. While Josephus in *Vita* 277–304 only mentions that the synagogue in Tiberias was a huge building capable of holding a large crowd, the type of war-time political deliberations that he recounts as taking place there within a gathering of the popular assembly is a characteristic function of public synagogues.

<sup>53</sup> Korner, *Origin*, 86 n. 29.

<sup>54</sup> See Donald D. Binder, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period*, SBLDS 169, 2nd print (Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 343–62.

<sup>55</sup> Josephus, *Vita* 277–303; Luke 4:16–31; m. Meg. 3:1. The archaeological record from sites such as Gamla and Magdala in the Galilee, and Umm El-Umdan and Kiryat Sefer in Judea, suggests that these “synagogue” gatherings met in public buildings designed with communitarian architecture quite similar to the Greco-Roman *bouleuterion*: columns and stepped benches lining all four walls are present in the remains of each of the structures just mentioned. The spatial focal point in these buildings was clearly the center, which made their de-

## 6. Association Synagogues

On the other hand were the “association-type synagogues,” which are likewise identifiable through a range of overlapping terms. As scholars like John Kloppenborg, Philip Harland, Anders Runesson, and Richard Last have shown, this type of assembly was organizationally modeled upon the kinds of membership networks found among Greco-Roman associations, such as, to name a few, the *collegia*, *thiasoi*, and *hetaeriae*.<sup>56</sup> These “synagogues” were defined by reference to, for example, shared occupations, social practices, neighborhood or geo-ethnic connections, or shared ideology, such as a particular philosophy or cult devotion. In short, association-type synagogues were not public/civic institutions.

This type of local-unofficial “association synagogue” certainly existed in the land of Israel. The synagogues of the Essenes mentioned by Philo<sup>57</sup> and the synagogue of the Libertines in Jerusalem mentioned in Acts<sup>58</sup> are good examples. However, they were, by nature, more prominent abroad throughout the Mediterranean, in diasporic contexts where Jews were not politically autonomous and the boundaries between Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors were porous or even non-existent. As some examples: Peter Richardson has compared the architectural remains from the first phase of the Ostia synagogue to the remains of Ostia’s Association of the Housebuilders;<sup>59</sup> a decree preserved by Josephus from Gaius Caesar to the Jewish community either in Delos or Parium calls the Jewish assembly there a *thiasos*, a “religious guild;”<sup>60</sup> and in *On the Contemplative Life*, Philo describes the Therapeutae, a Jewish philosophical association in Alexandria, as gathering together on the seventh day in a *semneion*, which seems to have been some sort of room in private house set apart for special use. But, for our purposes, perhaps the most illuminating example comes from Josephus’s brief description of the Jewish community in Antioch in *J. W.* 7.45. According to Josephus, the Jewish population in the city

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sign conducive to deliberative-style assemblies. See Runesson, “Synagogues without Rabbis,” 162.

<sup>56</sup> John S. Kloppenborg, *Christ’s Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020). Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*, rev. 2nd ed. (Kitchener, ON: Philip A. Harland, 2013). Runesson, “Placing Paul,” 42–67. Last, *Pauline*, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Philo, *Prob.* 80–83.

<sup>58</sup> Acts 6:9–10. For discussion, see Anders Runesson, Donald D. Binder, and Birger Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 CE*, *AJEC* 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), no. 18 (hereafter referred to as *ASSB*).

<sup>59</sup> Peter Richardson, “An Architectural Case for Synagogues as Associations,” in *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins until 200 CE: Papers Presented at an International Conference at Lund University October 14–17, 2001*, ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm, *ConBNT* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), 90–117, here 103–5, where he compares the Ostia synagogue’s floor plan with that of Ostia’s Association of the Housebuilders. See also Runesson, “Synagogues without Rabbis,” 159–72.

<sup>60</sup> *A. J.* 14.213–216.

flourished in the years after the brutal rule of Antiochus Epiphanes. This was evidenced by their attaining a citizenship status equal to the Greeks, their numerical growth, and the elaborate adorning of their “synagogue” (τό ἱερόν).<sup>61</sup> Josephus adds, however, that this flourishing involved bringing a great multitude of Greeks into the realm of Jewish “rites of worship,” and that these Greeks were, thus, “in some manner made a portion of them.”<sup>62</sup> In our view, proselytism does not seem to be what Josephus has in mind here but rather the introduction of non-Jews to Jewish practices within the institutional context of an association “synagogue.” The result of this introduction is that, to use Josephus’s terms, these non-Jews became, not Jews themselves, but a distinguishable segment (μοῖρα) within the larger Jewish community.

## 7. Pauline Assemblies and Association Synagogues

Association “synagogues” are the type of institution most relevant for understanding the socioreligious organization of Pauline assemblies. Two more general observations about these institutions will help us start thinking about Paul’s gentile groups. First, Richard Last has argued for the existence of associations in which devotion to Yahweh was at least one connection among group members, whether or not the *primary* one, and that they were often not ethnically homogenous; some were ethnic associations of Jews, but other ethnically diverse associations with the Yahweh connection existed beside them, with neighborhood or occupational links being the more socially binding features.<sup>63</sup> In other words, it was not unusual in antiquity to see Jews and non-Jews together in the same gathering spaces in which the Jewish deity was either the patron deity of the group or simply one among others. This ethnic heterogeneity of association “synagogues” reminds us that non-Jews could relate to the Jewish community in a wide variety of ways and within a wide variety of social frameworks. For some in, say, occupational associations, cult to the Jewish deity may have been, in fact, a marginal social aspect of the gatherings. For others, such as the σεβομένοι mentioned in Acts, Josephus, and several synagogue manumission inscriptions from the Bosphorus Kingdom, Yahweh worship seems to have been a much stronger, even the primary, social tie between non-Jewish and Jewish members in the group.<sup>64</sup> This would seem to be the case especially for some

<sup>61</sup> Josephus refers to this building immediately before this, in *J. W.* 7.44, as a συναγωγή. On ἱερόν as a “synagogue” term in this passage, see *ASSB* no. T10 (= no. 190).

<sup>62</sup> ET ours. Greek text (Niese edition) reads: αἰεὶ τε προσαγόμενοι ταῖς θρησκευταῖς πολὺ πλῆθος Ἑλλήνων, καὶ κείνους τρόπῳ τινὶ μοῖραν αὐτῶν πεποιήντο.

<sup>63</sup> Last, *Pauline*, 34–8.

<sup>64</sup> See Acts 14:1; 17:4, 12; 18:4. Josephus mentions in *A. J.* 14.110 that it was not only Jews who were contributing the “sacred monies” that led to the great sum of wealth in the Jerusalem temple but also non-Jews, “those who worshipped God” (καὶ σεβομένων τὸν θεόν), were

of Paul's gentiles who are described in 1 Thessalonians, for example, as henotheistic worshippers of Paul's "living and true god" (1 Thess 1:9).<sup>65</sup>

Second, there is evidence that smaller "Yahweh associations," with different social networking priorities, could exist within larger ones. For example, Tosefta Sukkah 4 describes the Great Alexandrian basilica-synagogue as a large association of Yahweh worshippers, who, however, did not all sit together but rather sat in smaller groups according to occupation: goldsmiths by themselves, blacksmiths by themselves, and embroiderers by themselves. The purpose of this grouping by occupation was entirely pragmatic: "so that when a poor man came in [to the synagogue] he joined his fellow tradesmen, and in this way was enabled to obtain a means of livelihood." Another example from the Tosefta comes just before this passage. Here Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananiah is recounted as saying that, during the days of the water-drawing ceremonies of Sukkot, he and his disciples "went to the synagogue, and then went to the bet midrash." In other words, his rabbinic circle participated in the larger assembly first and then went to their own membership-only gathering to study Torah according to the particular ways of their master.

Another example is the Nysa Inscription from Asia Minor, which Last discusses at length.<sup>66</sup> Although later in date, this inscription mentions that a person named Menandros built "the place for the people *and* for the assembly of Dositheos son of Theogenes." "Dositheos" was a common, though not exclusively, Jewish name.<sup>67</sup> However, it, coupled with the terms *τόπος* and *λαός*,<sup>68</sup> suggests that the inscription refers, on the one hand, to a larger, perhaps ethnically coherent, Yahweh association of Jews *and*, on the other hand, to a smaller association founded by an individual Jewish man, Dositheos, both of which used the same building for their assemblies. While the inscription does not make

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contributing as well. This suggests that Josephus has the activity of multi-ethnic associations devoted to Yahweh in mind. For synagogue manumission inscriptions, which mention the manumission of non-Jews in synagogue space (*προσενυχή*) and stipulate that they must continue to fear the Jewish deity and revere the "prayer hall," see ASSB nos. 124–26.

<sup>65</sup> Paula Fredriksen, "How High Can Early High Christology Be?" in *Monotheism and Christology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Matthew V. Novenson, NovTSup 180 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 293–319. Fredriksen, *Paul*, 12, defines henotheism as "the worship of only one god, without denying the existence of other gods." She points out in regard to the definition of monotheism, that "in antiquity, 'monotheists' were polytheists." Cf. Matthew V. Novenson, "Did Paul Abandon either Judaism or Monotheism?" in *The New Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 239–59.

<sup>66</sup> Last, *Pauline*, 28–9; IJO II, Nysa 26 III–IV CE (Walter Ameling, ed., *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*. Vol. 2: *Asia Minor* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004]).

<sup>67</sup> Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*. Part III: *The Western Diaspora 330 BCE–650 CE*, TSAJ 126 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 249–56 (esp. at 253).

<sup>68</sup> ASSB no. 113 notes that *τόπος* can be used as a reference to a "synagogue" (see also nos. 114, 136, 137, and 157). The term *λαός*, "people," here is clearly a reference to the Jewish people.



it clear, it is perhaps likely that Dositheos's group had a different primary social connection than the larger Yahweh group, and it is quite possible, as Last has argued, that it was multi-ethnic in composition, unlike the larger one.

Stories about Paul from the book of Acts might also provide evidence of a similar institutional phenomenon. For example, in Acts 18, the house of the "God-fearing" gentile Titius Justus, which Luke says was just next door to the Corinthian *synagōgē*, seems to have become a gathering place for Paul and his Corinthian Christ-followers who were, at the same time, attached to this *synagōgē*. It is possible, then, that this Christ association, which comprised of Jews and non-Jews, had been formed as a subgroup of the larger "synagogue."<sup>69</sup>

## 8. Pauline Christ-Groups as a Subgroup within Synagogue Assemblies

To come back to the question of this second section – did Paul expect his gentiles to continue going to synagogue? In light of what we just covered and allowing the segmentary grammar to guide our thinking, we may suggest the following. However small, Paul's gentiles certainly formed discernible groups whose primary social connection was Christ devotion; they formed associations, designated *ekklēsiai*, and had their own membership structure, elections, leaders, bylaws, and financial obligations. Our question, then, is: did Paul intend for these gentile Christ groups to remain attached to associations whose primary social connection was Yahweh worship, not necessarily Christ worship, or whether he intended that they disaffiliate from them?

While, according to the book of Acts, Paul himself seems to have encountered opposition within some Yahweh associations, we get no sense that this was the case everywhere or that it was the result of some sort of systematic and supra-local "persecution" or "discipline" of Paul from "the synagogues." Recall that, in Paul's day, there was no supra-local "synagogue authority" that standardized or centralized halakhah or the interpretation of Torah. Furthermore, association synagogues do not appear to have meted out punitive discipline, such as the floggings Paul says he received in 2 Cor 11:24.<sup>70</sup> These floggings

<sup>69</sup> Cf. also Acts 19:9, on Paul and the gatherings in the Lecture Hall of Tyrannus, where both Jews and non-Jews "hear the word of the Lord."

<sup>70</sup> There is an assumption in some Pauline scholarship that Paul's floggings mentioned in his autobiographical statements in 2 Cor 11:24 took place in diaspora synagogue settings and are thus representative of a general opposition of "the synagogues" to Paul's message. It is more historically likely that Paul's disciplinary floggings took place in a public/official synagogue setting in the land of Israel, even more specifically in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27–22:29, esp. 22:5, 17–21). On this historical point specifically, we agree with the argument put forward recently by Markus Oehler, "The Punishment of Thirty-Nine Lashes (2 Corinthians 11:24) and the Place of Paul in Judaism," *JBL* 140:3 (2021): 623–40. The public synagogue is the only



were localized incidents in Jerusalem. Romans 11 might suggest that Paul's gentiles there were tempted to disassociate from the larger Jewish community from which they had been originally recruited, but this sort of disassociation seems to be precisely what Paul attempts to *prevent*.<sup>71</sup>

### 9. Three Arguments that Paul Expected His Gentiles to Remain in Synagogue Communities

Rather, we suggest at least three features arise from Paul's letters that indicate that he expected his gentiles to continue participating in their local Yahweh associations.

*Acts and Former God-fearers:* First, however the book of Acts may or may not help us fill in the gaps, in his letters Paul is clearly not interested in his gentiles remaining mere god-fearers. Remember, gentiles who had an interest in the Jewish deity existed on a continuum, with most feeling perfectly fine about maintaining their devotion to their native gods and cults. Paul, however, placed a *henotheistic demand* upon his gentile Christ-followers, that they offer cult only to the god of Israel (1 Thess 1:9; Rom 3:29–30). This demand, as Paula Fredriksen has noted, is a fundamentally *Judaizing* demand, and one that assumes a continued link between Paul's gentiles and the larger Jewish community.<sup>72</sup> In Paul's day, the practice of a Judaizing henotheism by gentiles, as gentiles, was perhaps a social aggravation to some non-Jews, but it was not unheard of *in connection with larger* Jewish communities: Philo, for example, speaks of foreskinned gentiles among Jewish groups who have "alienated" themselves from *πολύθεος* and honor the one and only father of all things (QE 2.2).<sup>73</sup> Conversely, we have no evidence from the time of Paul of henotheistic gentiles wor-

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institution – and perhaps Jerusalem the only city – that could have taken formal punitive measures against Paul (e.g., the 39 lashes). In the diaspora, Paul would have simply been excluded from the association or, if legal charges were sought, brought before a city's *politarchai* (Acts 17:6). The account in Acts 17:1–9 (in Thessalonica) presents Paul's conflict within the "synagogue" as much more politically-oriented and ad hoc – mob like – than systematic Jewish opposition over the matter of Torah observance. Acts 19:8 suggests that Paul's "conflict" within the Ephesian assembly arose not from an individual instance of law-breaking, but rather resulted from a specific context of an extended period of time in which Paul was steeped in lively debate – he eventually gets frustrated enough and leaves on his own accord, taking is disciples with him, only to set up another Jewish association in the Hall of Tyrannus, in which Jews and Greeks "heard the word of the Lord" (19:10).

<sup>71</sup> Pace Watson, *Paul*, 203; Mark D. Nanos, "To the Churches within the Synagogues of Rome," in *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans*, ed. Jerry L. Sumney, RBS 73 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 11–28, here 24.

<sup>72</sup> Paula Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *NTS* 56:2 (2010): 232–52.

<sup>73</sup> Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 493–8.

shipping the Jewish God *apart from* the larger Jewish community. The social and political concern of the Romans for gentile "atheists" does not really become an issue until the second century, and even in this period there must have been enough gentile henotheists in synagogue settings for the early rabbis to develop halakhic expectations for "righteous gentiles" that included the proscription of idol worship (t. Avod. Zar. 8:4; b. Sanh. 56b).<sup>74</sup> Thus, as Mark Nanos has mentioned, if Paul expected his gentile Christ-followers to neglect their native cults and worship Israel's god *apart from* affiliation with larger Jewish communities, it is highly likely that they would have been known early on, while still a small and marginal social group, as a threat to the welfare of the empire. It seems rather that Paul's desire to see regular old god-fearers "converted" into exclusive worshippers of the Jewish deity by means of their being in-Christ is a natural outworking of his expectation that they would continue participating in the types of associations that would have attracted the greatest number of Jewish henotheists. In what setting could gentiles practice a Judaizing henotheism other than in association synagogues that had Yahweh devotion as its principal social connection?

*Scriptural Argument and Staying:* The second feature that suggests Paul expected gentile Christ-followers to remain within their larger Yahweh associations is his *scriptural argument*. Nanos has observed that Paul's argument, particularly as set forth in Romans, presupposes not only competence in the contents of Jewish scripture but regular exposure to them in social settings in which scriptural texts were read, translated, and interpreted (e.g., Rom 2:17–20).<sup>75</sup> Jewish scripture does not appear to have been widely studied or well known outside of and apart from Jewish groups in Paul's day. And to own copies of these texts would have required both a level of wealth and, more importantly, competent readers. From a socio-historical perspective, the question is whether we should expect Paul's gentile groups – some of which were perhaps quite small in number – to have had such resources at their disposal apart from larger association synagogues.<sup>76</sup> It is, indeed, *possible* – and certainly by the time Justin Martyr writes his *First Apology* this appears to be the case (*1 Apol.* 67). But in Paul's time, a time when the Christ-movement is still very much finding its footing within the gentile world, it seems more likely that his gentile Christ-followers would have continued receiving instruction in Jewish scripture from their local Yahweh associations and Christ-oriented instruction in their sub-group gatherings. This is, then, a good example of the segmentary grammar of identity.

<sup>74</sup> Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *HTR* 82:1 (1989): 13–33, here 22. On other expressions of universalist attitudes in early rabbinic literature, see Marc Hirshman, "Rabbinic Universalism in the Second and Third Centuries," *HTR* 93:2 (2000): 101–15.

<sup>75</sup> Nanos, "To the Churches," 21.

<sup>76</sup> Last, *Pauline*, 81, suggests "nine or ten members" for the Corinthian group.

*Keeping the Commandments as Evidence:* Third, far from proclaiming a “Law-free gospel,” Paul seems to have invited his gentiles to take on a level of Jewishness through “keeping God’s commandments.” For example, as Matthew Thiessen has argued, in the case of Rom 2:17–29, Paul expresses his desire for foreskinned gentiles to keep the requirements of the law, which involves their *not* practicing proselyte circumcision.<sup>77</sup> Paula Fredriksen has also made a strong case that, in 1 Cor 7:17–20, Paul is addressing the issue of gentile circumcision versus gentile foreskin: while he expresses a level of indifference to both, he stresses that what matters is that gentiles “keep the commandments of God.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, following Nanos, Paul might not want his gentiles to become Jews but he certainly wants them to become “Jew-*ish*.” For Paul to expect gentiles to maintain a Jew-*ish* identity, he must envision a socioreligious setting for that identity to be cultivated and shaped around Jewish teaching for gentiles. So, for example, Paul’s fictive interlocutor in Romans 2, who acts as a sort of pedagogical stand-in for Paul’s readers,<sup>79</sup> not only “names himself an *Ioudaios*” but is also “instructed from the Law” and “knows God’s will.” Certainly, Paul’s language here is rhetorical, as he aims to expose the interlocutor’s hypocrisy as, perhaps, a judgey Judaizing gentile, but the point is that Paul envisions among the Roman Christ-groups a type of gentile reader who openly identifies with the Jewish community and who is actively receiving instruction from the Law (see also Rom 7:1).<sup>80</sup> It is hard to imagine this type of gentile Christ-follower in Rome having such an identity apart from a larger Yahweh association in which gentiles – proselytes as well as those with foreskin – were being taught the commandments. In other words, Paul has no qualms with the gentile being law observant – and where else in the ancient world would you find law observant gentiles than in “synagogues”?

Now, precisely *which* of the commandments Paul had in mind when he calls gentiles to observe them is not necessarily clear. Surely, they include the standards of community behavior as described in the Decalogue.<sup>81</sup> The Decalogue

<sup>77</sup> There continues to be significant debate over the identity of the “self-named Jew” in Rom 2:17. See the arguments put forth by Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 68–70; Fredriksen, *Paul*, 156–7.

<sup>78</sup> Fredriksen, *Paul*, 107–8, 111, 118. See Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 52.

<sup>79</sup> Fredriksen, *Paul*, 156, citing Thorsteinsson, *Interlocutor*. Cf. Markus Öhler, “If you are called a Judean ...” (Rom 2:17): Paul and his Interlocutor,” in *Israel and the Nations: Paul’s Gospel in the Context of Jewish Expectations*, ed. František Ábel (Lanham: Lexington, 2021), 219–42, here 227, concludes it is slightly more likely to be a Judean rather than a person from the nations. Windsor, *Paul*, 162, sees here a Jewish teacher in the synagogue. Cf. Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 48.

<sup>80</sup> See my (J. Brian Tucker) openness to this in Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 47–51, while acknowledging the challenges associated with it, thus the perhaps above. An idealized in-Christ Jewish teacher of gentiles remains a strong possibility (48), who teaches in the association gathering, rather than the larger Yahweh association as envisioned by Windsor.

<sup>81</sup> Rosner, *Paul*, 163–4, who highlights the role of the Decalogue in forming group norms.

is mentioned explicitly in Rom 13:8–10, where Paul takes a Hillel-like approach to summing up the Law through the principle of love of neighbor (b. Šabb. 31a). Perhaps also included here are other parts of Torah aimed at non-Israelites, such as the various prescriptions against idolatry in Lev 17–18, or something akin to the Noachide Laws for righteous gentiles.<sup>82</sup> In 1 Cor 5:8, Paul encourages his gentiles to “celebrate the festival” (i.e., Passover) with Christ as their τὸ πάσχα. While, as Jane Lancaster Patterson has shown, Paul’s language here draws on the paschal metaphor and demonstrates his continuity with Jewish cultic practice, it is possible that Paul nevertheless envisions a “real” ritual practice in which gentiles really do celebrate the Passover with imbued messianic significance.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, in Rom 14, Paul seems to treat gentile observance of Jewish holidays and food halakhah as a viable way of life for Christ-followers who seek to honor the Jewish god.<sup>84</sup> These observant gentiles are the ones that Paul especially expected to continue participating in the ritual life of their local Yahweh associations. Sabbath observance, after all, is explicitly connected to synagogue practices in some ancient Jewish texts, and it was apparently widely practiced in antiquity among Judaizing gentiles, henotheist or not.<sup>85</sup> In later centuries, we see the phenomenon of observant gentile Christ-followers in “synagogue” settings continue. Origen, for example, tells his gentile Christ-followers not to discuss in his Christian assembly questions they had heard raised in synagogue the day before, that is, on the Sabbath.<sup>86</sup> This implies, of course, that members of his congregation were observing the seventh-day. A hundred and fifty years

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His reference to the T. Naph. 8:7–9 provides nuance in regard to the traditional debate over fulfilling and doing Torah (122). Cf. Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 92–3, 96.

<sup>82</sup> Acts 15:19–32; 16:1–5; 21:25; cf. Nanos, *Mystery*, 52; Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 50, 273–5. Pace Philip La Grange Du Toit, *God’s Saved Israel: Reading Romans 11:26 and Galatians 6:16 in Terms of the New Identity in Christ and the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 142–4.

<sup>83</sup> Jane Lancaster Patterson, *Keeping the Feast: Metaphors of Sacrifice in 1 Corinthians and Philippians*, ECL 16 (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 54, 59–60. Tucker, *Reading 1 Corinthians*, 74–5.

<sup>84</sup> Assuming that the “weak” here are Judaizing gentiles and/or former god-fearers, see Tucker, *Reading Romans*, 200; cf. A. Andrew Das, “The Gentile-Encoded Audience of Romans: The Church outside the Synagogue,” in *Reading Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. Jerry L. Sumney, RBS 73 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 29–46, here 36–7. See Horace, *Sat.* 1.9.68–72, in regard to a Sabbath-observing non-Jew described as “a somewhat weaker brother, one of the many.”

<sup>85</sup> E.g., Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.96–106; Tertullian, *Nat.* 1.13.3–4. See Das, “Gentile Encoded,” 36–7.

<sup>86</sup> Origen, *Hom. Lev.* 5.8; *Sel. Exod.* 12.46. Cited in Paula Fredriksen, “Compassion is to Purity as Fish is to Bicycle and Other Reflections on Constructions of ‘Judaism’ in Current Work on the Historical Jesus,” in *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism and the Historical Jesus: Subtexts and Criticism*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and John W. Marshall (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 55–67, here 67. See also Wally V. Cirafesi, “The Socio-Economic Context of Capernaum’s Limestone Synagogue and Jewish-Christian Relations in the Late-Ancient Town,” *Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 32:1 (2021): 46–65, here 56, for further citations.

after Origen, John Chrysostom infamously lamented that many gentile Christians in his Antiochene congregation “fast on the same day as the Jews, and keep the Sabbaths in the same manner.”<sup>87</sup> In addition to going to synagogue, they take oaths in front of Torah scrolls and celebrate Passover and Sukkot along with the broader Jewish community. Karin Hedner Zetterholm has argued that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* represents a Jewish reception of Acts and Paul shaped by a Jewish milieu. The *Homilies*, she argues, are best understood to reflect the ideology of a Jesus-oriented sub-group within a broader Jewish community that addresses its teaching exclusively to gentiles.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that what Origen, John Chrysostom, and perhaps others saw as a problem in their time, Paul before them considered a social implication of his Judaizing gospel: that, while gentile Christ-followers should not circumcise and become Jews, they could, even *should*, live “Jewishly” by, for example, becoming good henotheists, keeping the standards of conduct as prescribed in Jewish law, and, as Fredriksen has put it, “keeping Jewish time.” This living “Jewishly” assumed the maintenance of one’s membership in associations that were oriented around the worship of the Jewish god.

## 10. Eschatological Pilgrimage Tradition

Placing Paul’s groups within the institutional context of association “synagogues” as we’ve done here, opens up new interpretive possibilities. As Anders Runesson has argued, this institutional setting drives the production of Paul’s theology.<sup>89</sup> The theoretical resources found in the segmentary grammar of identity leads to the construction of theology. As Paul observes the social phenomenon of in-Christ gentiles worshipping with Jews in synagogue spaces as members from the nations, the eschatological pilgrimage tradition begins to emerge in his theologizing.<sup>90</sup> Terence Donaldson comments that those of the Paul within Judaism approach are “unanimous in drawing on such eschatological pil-

<sup>87</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Gal.* 1.7 (PG 61:623–24). ET is from *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 13:8.

<sup>88</sup> Karin Hedner Zetterholm, “Jewish Teachings for Gentiles in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*: A Reception of Ideas in Paul and Acts Shaped by a Jewish Milieu?,” *JJMJS* 6 (2019): 68–87.

<sup>89</sup> Runesson, “Placing Paul,” 44–5.

<sup>90</sup> The fact that none of the sources for association-type synagogues that we have discussed presents non-Jews as participating in such institutions in *Jerusalem* specifically should not prevent us from seeing the relevance of the eschatological pilgrimage as a whole for Paul’s theologizing. Further, if we follow Binder’s theory, that Second Temple period synagogues functioned variously as ideological extensions of the Jerusalem temple courts – within which gentile pilgrims certainly had a place, even if restricted – then we might, indeed, have reason to believe that Paul’s vision of in-Christ gentiles worshipping alongside the Jewish people in association synagogues represents his own ideological extension of the Jerusalem-centric eschatological pilgrimage tradition. See Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*.

grimage expectations" in understanding Paul's gospel or the status of the *ethnē*-in-Christ.<sup>91</sup> Matthew Novenson rejects the idea that this approach guided Paul's conception of the gentiles, since he never cites the key passages: Isa 2:2–5/Mic 4:1–5 and Zech 8:22–23. Paul within Judaism interpreters have failed to address the idea that all three aspects of the tradition need to be present: eschatology, pilgrimage, and gentiles, for it to be clear that Paul relied on this tradition.<sup>92</sup> Here we offer a few comments to address this gap.

Novenson claims Paul does not cite from this tradition. There is a citation of Isa 11:10 in Rom 15:12, but he uses this as an example that lacks pilgrimage, and citing Roberts, shows it should be excluded from the tradition.<sup>93</sup> The reason Paul cites Isa 11:10 and not 2:2–5 in Rom 15:12 is because there is a messianic "eschatological subjection" of the nations but not "eschatological pilgrimage of the gentiles to Zion."<sup>94</sup> However, the oracles in Isa 2:4 and 11:3–4 both include a righteous ruler, and 11:5–9 describes his knowledge filling the earth. Even Roberts acknowledges that 11:10 parallels closely the vision of 2:2–5, though again the nations go to the "root of Jesse" instead of "the divine mountain."<sup>95</sup> This may be a case of metonymy, where "In that day the root of Jesse, which remains standing, will be like a flag for the peoples," can stand for a reference to the city – in which case there is pilgrimage here. Even if the focus is on the king and not the city, the city is not ignored: "and his resting place will be glorious" (11:10e), and in Ps 132:14, the "resting place" is Zion, God's eternal abode.<sup>96</sup> It is likely then that Rom 15:12 with its citation of Isa 11:10 does have all three components: eschatology, pilgrimage, and gentiles.

<sup>91</sup> Terence L. Donaldson, "Paul within Judaism: A Critical Evaluation from a 'New Perspective' Perspective," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context of the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 277–301, here 285, he rejects this idea opting instead for the Jewish proselytizing approach, see Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 51–78. Donaldson's approach suffers from an overreliance on the encompassment grammar of identity.

<sup>92</sup> Matthew V. Novenson, "What Eschatological Pilgrimage of the Gentiles?," in *Israel and the Nations: Paul's Gospel in the Context of Jewish Expectations*, ed. František Ábel (Lanham: Lexington, 2021), 61–73, here 62, he opts for the eschatological obedience of the gentiles in its place (67). He cites Tob 13:9–11; Sib. Or. 3.715–719; 1 En. 90:29–31, as developments within this tradition (63), one wonders if Paul may be part of such a development as well, and that accounts for the differences scholars notice. See the discussion in Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Paul, the Israelite, on Israel and the Gentiles at the End of Time: Reflections on Rom 9–11," in Ábel, *Israel and the Nations*, 271–88, here 276–80.

<sup>93</sup> Novenson, "What Eschatological," 65, 70 n. 17; Jimmy J.M. Roberts, "The End of War in the Zion Tradition," *HBT* 26 (2004): 2–22.

<sup>94</sup> Novenson, "What Eschatological," 66.

<sup>95</sup> Roberts, "The End," 11.

<sup>96</sup> Roberts, "The End," 12. The Isaiah 2 oracle is paralleled in Mic 4, which also shows the king ruling from Mount Zion (Mic 4:7), as the city itself is restored to his former glory (4:8), and is ruled by a new king from Bethlehem (5:1–3). The hopes and expectations of a renewed Davidic empire seen in Isaiah and Micah is one centered in Jerusalem.

In Galatians 4:27 Paul cites Isa 54:1. This does not deter Novenson, who points out that generally speaking there is a lack of Zion-discourse in Paul but when it occurs Israel is in view.<sup>97</sup> “Gentiles-in-Christ (like Jews-in-Christ, presumably) have the Jerusalem *above* as their metropolis (Gal 4:26), not the present Jerusalem (Gal 4:25), which perhaps is why Paul does not exhort them to make pilgrimage there.”<sup>98</sup> Similar to the Rom 15:12 citation of Isa 11:10, the context of Isaiah 54 reflects the eschatological pilgrimage tradition; Paul’s use of it here in Galatians 4 is to be expected. In Paul’s argument in 4:21–31, “Jerusalem above” (4:26) serves as an element of his argument that holds little semantic information, while “present Jerusalem” (4:25) as a category is problematic since the Temple in Jerusalem is still standing and restricts full access to in-Christ gentiles. According to Ryan Heinsch, it is unlikely that a bifurcation between the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem is in view in the sense that Jewish writers of the period could think of the physical city and the heavenly one as the same thing.<sup>99</sup> Novenson’s claim here in regards to the binary relationships, often a result of the orientalizing grammar, is not convincing. A return to a “Jerusalem above” would in some sense also be a return to the “present Jerusalem;” while there may be a de-centralizing of the present Jerusalem it is not a displacing of the Temple.<sup>100</sup> It is, according to Heinsch, “envision[ing] Jerusalem as thirdspace: a space were gentiles can worship Israel’s God as gentiles. This view [...] is in line with the prophetic promises that the nations would one day flock to Jerusalem: promises that Paul believed were being fulfilled in his own time (e.g., Isa 2:2; 54:1–3; 55:4–5, 10; 56:6–8; 60:5).”<sup>101</sup> It is also likely then that Gal 4:27 with its citation of Isa 54:1 also includes eschatology, pilgrimage and gentiles, and should be included as evidence that this tradition informed Paul in rejecting the idea that in-Christ gentiles should be absorbed into Israel without remainder.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>97</sup> It occurs in Rom 9:33 citing Isa 28:16 and Rom 11:26 citing Isa 59:20, both sections have Israel in view and not in-Christ gentiles (though there is relevance for gentiles in terms of the connected-to-Israel nature of their in-Christ identity, as to be expected reading with the segmentary grammar of identity).

<sup>98</sup> Novenson, “What Eschatological,” 67. David I. Starling, *Not My People*, 28, rightly picks up “Paul’s aim in this section ... is to win his readers’ obedience to the imperative with which the section closes in 5:1b.”

<sup>99</sup> Ryan Heinsch, “What does Hagar have to do with Mount Sinai and Jerusalem: Critical Spatial Theory and Identity in Galatians 4:24–26” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SBL, Boston, MA, 20 November 2017), 1–14, here 12, citing 1 Kgs 8:48; 9:3; Ps 87:1–3; Ezek 43:6–7; Sir 24:1–12; 1 En. 89:50–73.

<sup>100</sup> Kathleen Troost-Cramer, “De-Centralizing the Temple: A Rereading of Romans 15:16,” *JJMJS* 3 (2016): 72–101, here 92–9; Fredriksen, “Judaizing,” 250. The issue is the Temple and what it does to the gentiles but not the Temple *per se*.

<sup>101</sup> Heinsch, “What Does,” 12–13.

<sup>102</sup> Starling, *Not My People*, 30, may go too far in claiming a text originally written to historic Israel applies directly to uncircumcised gentiles; rather, Paul still views Isa 54:1 addressing Israel’s restoration that is now underway, and this end to exile results in the blessing



While not a significant part of Novenson's argument, the Jerusalem collection is often pointed to as evidence that the eschatological pilgrimage tradition is salient for Paul's view of the end-times gentiles, though not as much recently.<sup>103</sup> Novenson recognizes the early work of Johannes Munck and Dieter Georgi in this regard but then sets aside the idea that "Paul's collection of money from the gentile Christ-assemblies abroad to give aid to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem" had the pilgrimage tradition in view: (a) Paul nowhere presents the gathering as a pilgrimage; (b) Paul delivers the collection not the gentiles; and (c) he delivers it not to the temple on Mount Zion but to the Messiah-Followers in Jerusalem.<sup>104</sup> The Jerusalem collection seems to fail Novenson's framework since it does not include eschatology or pilgrimage. Gentiles are in view in 1 Cor 16:3, assuming the Corinthians would "approve" gentiles to deliver their "gift to Jerusalem," though by Rom 15:28 it appears Paul is going to deliver it, though this is formally an argument from silence and 2 Cor 8:16–24 does suggest a potentially mixed ethnic group of administrators for the collection. Either way, it is still the money from the nations coming to Jerusalem. As regards eschatology and pilgrimage, Julien Ogereau argues concerning the Jerusalem collection, "the whole enterprise was rooted in the conviction that the advent of the eschatological kingdom of God had inaugurated a new socio-economic order, which was to become distinctive of the emergent Christ-believing communities on a global scale."<sup>105</sup> Munck, Nickle, and Georgi, in different ways, contend that the eschatological pilgrimage tradition influenced Paul's collection project. This has not been widely accepted since there seems to be little textual basis for the connection; however, Paul's Jewish interpretive-context, its socioreligious synagogue setting within the broader Jewish community, and its potential reconciliatory impulse are important contributions from the work of these scholars that combine to suggest this should be given further consideration. Second Corinthians 8:14, with its reference to "in the now time" (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ), may suggest Paul views the collection as an eschatological event, where the wealth of the nations flows into Zion (Isa 60:5).<sup>106</sup> The recipi-

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of Abraham extending now to the nations (Ryan Heinsch, *The Figure of Hagar in Ancient Judaism and Galatians*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming)). Is it possible that this is a both/and, an interpretive option that the segmentary grammar opens up. David J. Rudolph, "Zionism in Pauline Literature: Does Paul Eliminate Particularity for Israel and the Land in His Portrayal of Salvation Available for All the World?" in *The New Christian Zionism*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), 167–94, here 176, discussing Isa 54:2–3 reflects this segmentary approach: Israel inherits the cities of its enemies and also blesses the nations (Gen 22:17–18; 28:14).

<sup>103</sup> Samuel Auler, "More than a Gift: Revisiting Paul's Collection for Jerusalem and the Pilgrimage of Gentiles," *JSPL* 6 (2016): 143–60. 1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8–9; Rom 15:25–28.

<sup>104</sup> Novenson, "What Eschatological," 64.

<sup>105</sup> Julien Ogereau, "The Jerusalem Collection as κοινωνία: Paul's Global Politics of Socio-Economic Equality and Solidarity," *NTS* 58:3 (2012): 360–78.

<sup>106</sup> Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1954), 299–305.



ents as “the saints” could be an inclusive group of Jews (messianic and non-messianic), offering further support for seeing a continued intra-synagogal socioreligious setting. In regard to the distribution of the resources, it would be expected that the network associated with the Temple on Mount Zion would have been accessed. It is this sort of institutional engagement that may account for Paul’s concern for the acceptance of the gift in Rom 15:31.<sup>107</sup> At least initially, it looks like the Jerusalem Collection too can pass Novenson’s framework of eschatology, pilgrimage, and gentiles.

## 11. Conclusion

Michael Bird’s orienting call for scholars “to identify the particular socioreligious location of Paul and his converts, as well as the theological texture of his argumentation” has proven helpful in clarifying our thinking on three important issues. First, through the recognition of the segmentary identity grammar we were able to uncover the way in-Christ gentiles could remain distinct as gentiles at one level of their identity while being included in an Israel-like identity without becoming Jews at another level. Some refer to this as the prophetic or commonwealth of Israel model.<sup>108</sup> This is a hermeneutical issue that implicates the texts we read and the presuppositions of the interpreters as well. The continuation of gentile identities raises questions as to whether Paul’s gentile groups could still be described as part of the synagogue community. It was discovered that recent work in Greco-Roman associations provides historical justification for claiming that Paul expected these ex-pagan gentiles to still go to synagogue. In other words, Paul’s mission was not to roam around the Mediterranean basin in order to empty local synagogues. He presupposes this as the continuing institutional context for the Pauline Christ-groups. This segmentary subgroup identity was important to Paul theologically. Third, it was found that the eschatological pilgrimage tradition informed his thinking and provided the basis for the continuation of gentile identity in-Christ, since members of the nations need to be distinct from God’s people Israel, though in that distinction they are an eschatological extension of Israel, part of the commonwealth of Is-

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Keith Nickle, *The Collection: A Study of Paul’s Strategy* (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1966), 136. Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 119.

<sup>107</sup> Kathy Ehrensperger, “The Ministry to Jerusalem (Rom 15:31): Paul’s Hopes and Fears,” *TZ* 69:4 (2013): 338–52.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalm 90–106), in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, ed. Nobert L. Lohfink and Erich Zenger, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2000), 161–90; Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 44; Rudolph, “Zionism,” 167–94.

rael. While there are still other issues to address in order to argue more fully whether the “contra,” “intra,” or “bridge” perspective account most fully for Paul’s letters, these three points at least address reoccurring criticisms of the Paul within Judaism perspective.



# For Who Has Known the Mind of the Apostle?

Paul, the Law, and His *Syngeneis* in the Messiah\*

Ryan D. Collman

## 1. Introduction

In an essay from 1988, Philip Alexander highlights two key assumptions in New Testament scholarship when it comes to approaching the subject of Jesus and the law: (1) that we know what the Torah is and (2) in what ways it was central to the lives of ancient Jews.<sup>1</sup> Based on standard assumptions about defining what the law is (i.e., the Pentateuch/Torah of Moses) and its centrality in ancient Judaism, interpreters then set off to compare the teachings of Jesus with “Judaism” in order to see if Jesus was or was not a “law-observant Jew.” Alexander problematizes these assumptions – and this general enterprise – by noting the difficult questions that arise when one seeks to define the law in the first century: What non-biblical traditions were a component of the law? Who enforced the law and how? According to whose interpretation of the law? Etc. After exploring these questions and examining how the law was applied in the Jewish law courts of the first century, he argues that the law in first century “cannot be identified *simpliciter* with the Pentateuch.”<sup>2</sup>

Like Alexander, a number of other scholars of ancient Judaism and early Christianity have recently highlighted the diverse nature of Jewish law in the first century. Building on the work of Alexander, Anders Runesson explores the issue of the law and law observance in the first century through his work on the ancient synagogue.<sup>3</sup> Looking at inscriptions and archaeological findings, Ru-

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\* I am grateful for the invitation from Mike Bird to present this essay at the Paul and Judaism conference he graciously hosted. I must also extend gratitude to my fellow participants at the conference for their interaction with my work, notably Ruben Bühner, Jörg Frey, Josh Jipp, David Starling, and Paula Fredriksen. My writing group, The Covid Collective, also provided me with valuable feedback that improved this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Philip S. Alexander, “Jewish Law in the Time of Jesus: Towards a Clarification of the Problem,” in *Law and Religion: Essays on the Place of the Law in Israel and Early Christianity*, ed. Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1988), 44–58, here 44–6.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander, “Jewish Law,” 46.

<sup>3</sup> Anders Runesson, “Entering a Synagogue with Paul: First-Century Torah Observance,” in *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity*, ed. Susan J. Wendel and David M. Miller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 11–26.

nesson notes, “the institutional climate in which Torah observance was formed was open and non-static, lacking supra-local authority structures and thus allowing for local variation with regard to what constituted Torah observance and which texts would be important for establishing this.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Shayna Sheinfeld offers a survey of some prominent discussions of the law in Philo, Josephus, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch, and highlights the broad diversity of meanings and referents ascribed to Torah.<sup>5</sup> Sheinfeld proposes that the view of the law amongst first-century Jews is “variegated, flexible, and chang[es] depending on the circumstance.”<sup>6</sup>

Returning to the work of Alexander, in addition to these central definitional issues, he also notes that we cannot assume that all ancient Jews viewed the centrality of the Torah in the same way.<sup>7</sup>

To put it boldly there was no universally acknowledged body of laws at the heart of Judaism in the time of Jesus. Any generalisations to which all Jews would have assented would have been at such a level of abstraction as to have very little substantive content. The centrality of the Torah of Moses to Judaism was the centrality of a national flag. All Jews would have emotively rallied to it: each would have interpreted the meaning of the flag in his own way; each group would have had its own definition of what beliefs and practices constituted loyalty to the flag. Attacks on the Torah would have needed to have been of a gross and very sweeping kind to have been regarded as attacks on Judaism, as negations of the law. To put oneself beyond the pale, one would have had to spit on the flag in a very public and conspicuous way.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Runesson, “Entering a Synagogue,” 24.

<sup>5</sup> Shayna Sheinfeld, “From *Nomos* to *Logos*: Torah in First-Century Jewish Texts,” in *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism*, ed. František Ábel (Lenham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 61–74.

<sup>6</sup> Sheinfeld, “From *Nomos* to *Logos*,” 71. See also the discussions about the diversity of opinions about what constitutes Torah observance in Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 68; Karin Hedner Zetterholm, “The Question of Assumptions: Torah Observance in the First Century,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 79–103; Kathy Ehrensperger, “Die ‘Paul within Judaism’-Perspektive. Eine Übersicht,” *EvT* 80 (2020): 455–64, here 461. On the continued fragmentation of observance and interpretation of Torah in early Rabbinic Judaism, see Catherine Hezser, “Social Fragmentation, Plurality of Opinion, and Nonobservance of Halakhah: Rabbis and Community in Late Roman Palestine,” *JSQ* 1 (1993/94): 234–51.

<sup>7</sup> Something similar has also been recently argued by Logan Williams, “Is Torah-Observance the Essence of Judaism? An Historical and Decolonial Critique of the ‘Paul within Judaism’ Schule” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the British New Testament Society, Durham, UK, 22 August 2021). Williams pushes back against the assumption that Torah-observance is the essence of Judaism, noting the diversity of interpretation about the law and the existence of Jewish groups who seems to be unaware that the Torah of Moses even exists (i.e., the Jews of Elephantine [c. fifth century BCE]). See also the discussion in John J. Collins, *The Invention of Judaism: Torah and Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy to Paul* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), esp. 44–79.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander, “Jewish Law,” 56.

While Alexander applies his incisive critique to the study of Jesus and the law, one can easily expand this critique to include the study of Paul and the law. This brings us to the question this essay has been tasked to answer: “How would Jewish Christ-believers respond to Pauline halakhah about the Torah?”

This question, however, is not an easy one to answer. As our interpreters above demonstrate, there was no uniform position on the Torah in first-century Judaism that we are able to ascribe to any given group. Given the pluriform nature of ancient Judaism and the various attitudes of different groups toward the law, we can thus only speak to their perspectives on the Torah – and more specifically Paul’s teaching on the Torah – insofar as they have been recorded and preserved for us to interpret. While one *could* speculate about what some hypothetical group of Jewish followers of Jesus<sup>9</sup> may have thought about Paul’s teaching on the law, this essay will focus on the ancient evidence we have concerning Jewish followers of Jesus and Paul.<sup>10</sup> As the sources I look at below demonstrate, our evidence for what Jewish followers of Jesus thought about Paul and the law is scant. Outside of the perspectives preserved in the New Testament, the sources we have that speak of Jewish followers of Jesus and Paul are second-hand and generally of dubious quality and reliability. Despite this minimal evidence, I will proceed by first looking at texts that specifically speak of groups of Jewish followers of Jesus and Paul, to see where and how issues of Paul and the law are discussed. After discussing the available evidence, in the second half of the essay I will then offer my own treatment of Paul’s discussion

<sup>9</sup> I avoid the language of “Jewish-Christianity” given its inherent anachronism and complicated use in the history of scholarship. On this discussion, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism*, TSAJ 171 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018); Matt Jackson-McCabe, *Jewish Christianity: The Making of the Christianity-Judaism Divide*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020). On the variety of Jewish followers of Jesus in the first few centuries, see the various essays in Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> If one were to engage in this speculative exercise, they would first have to determine what Paul’s teaching on the Torah actually was. Thus, the reading this exercise would produce would not necessarily be what a hypothetical group of Jewish followers of Jesus might have thought about Paul’s teaching on the Torah, but what they might have thought about this particular interpretation of Paul’s teaching on the Torah. This is one of the primary reasons why I am hesitant in engaging in such a speculative exercise; I am not confident that the results would lead us to a better historical understanding of how Paul’s fellow Jews within the Jesus movement might have thought about his discussion of the law. How one accesses and conjures “Paul” as an individual also poses a number of historiographical issues for how one might engage in this speculative exercise. On this, see Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 428: “Pauline interpretation is fundamentally an artistic exercise in conjuring up and depicting a dead man from his ghostly images in the ancient text, as projected on a background composed from a selection of existing sources. All these portraits are based upon a new configuration of the surviving evidence, set into a particular, chosen, framework.” See also the discussion in Benjamin L. White, *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

of the Torah. Our study thus begins in our earliest sources involving Paul and Jewish followers of Jesus – the epistles of the Apostle himself.

## 2. Portrayals of Paul, Jewish Followers of Jesus, and the Torah

### 2.1 *Pauline Epistles*

At a number of points in his epistles, Paul refers to groups of agitators who he clashes with over issues of the law and its observance. These intra-Jewish discussions, however, are rather specific in their scope. Paul's disagreements with these groups – be it the *pseudadelphoi* (Gal 2:4; cf. Acts 15:1),<sup>11</sup> the agitators (Gal 1:7; 5:10) or the wicked working, mutilated dogs (Phil 3:2)<sup>12</sup> – are not over how Jews in the Jesus movement relate to their ancestral law, but *specifically* to the situation of non-Jews in the *ekklēsia*.<sup>13</sup> What is required of them? To what extent do they need to keep the Jewish ancestral law (however defined)? Do the male members need to remove their foreskins? What does not seem to be under discussion between Paul and these groups – according to Paul, at least – is the situation of Jews vis-à-vis circumcision and Torah. The general situation of Jewish followers of Jesus and the practice of their ancestral law does not appear to be a point of contention. As Paul argues in 1 Cor 7:17–20, Jews in the Jesus movement are to keep the status quo as it pertains to their Torah observance, which is also the majority position of the Jewish members of the Jesus movement as portrayed in Acts 15.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> While Paul polemically refers to them as “psuedo-brothers,” based on the parallel account in Acts 15 it seems they would have identified as Jewish followers of Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> While the identity of the agitators in Galatians and Philippians is not made explicit by Paul, given the subject matter at hand it is likely that they would identify as Jewish followers of Jesus. As I have argued elsewhere, this does not mean that these groups are natural born Jews. Based on the way Paul describes these groups, in both Galatians and Philippians I think they are most likely Jesus following, gentile proselytes to Judaism. See my discussions in Ryan D. Collman, “Beware the Dogs! The Phallic Epithet in Phil 3.2,” *NTS* 67 (2021): 105–20; idem, *The Apostle to the Foreskin: Circumcision in the Letters of Paul*, BZNW 259 (Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming). See also, Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 95–6.

<sup>13</sup> Ehrensperger, “Die ‘Paul within Judaism’-Perspektive,” 459–61. In contrast to this perspective, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr takes a relatively more traditional approach and argues that Paul's discussion of the Torah centers on laws that are directly related to the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the *ekklēsia*. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Jesus, Paulus und die Pharisäer. Beobachtungen zu ihren historischen Zusammenhängen, zum Toraverständnis und zur Anthropologie,” *RCatT* 34 (2009): 317–46, here 334–41.

<sup>14</sup> On 1 Cor 7:17–20 and Acts 15, see Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, CRINT 1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990); Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 170–2; Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009),

One point at which there appears to be diverging opinions between Paul and other Jews as it pertains to aspects of Jewish law is the so-called Antioch incident in Gal 2:11–14. In Paul’s recounting of the narrative, he had to rebuke Cephas for withdrawing from eating with non-Jews at the behest of “some men from James.”<sup>15</sup> While Paul and Cephas were in the habit of eating with non-Jews – perhaps even in their homes in the presence of pagan idols, what Paul calls “living gentilishly”<sup>16</sup> – this scandalized the men from James who did not find this dining behavior acceptable. But this disagreement is not a major disagreement about the Torah, but rather how one navigates table-fellowship *halakhah* in a diaspora context. Like some Second Temple Jews (Jub. 22:26; Jos. Asen. 7:1), the men from James were uncomfortable with mixed dining, but like other Second Temple Jews, Paul and Cephas had no issue with the practice as long as the food was not forbidden (Dan 1:3–17; Tob 1:11; 2 Macc 7:1–2; Jdt 10:5; 12:17–19; Let. Aris. 181–294).<sup>17</sup> Paul does, however, use Cephas’ about-face as a way to demonstrate a larger point of agreement between them regarding the law: that eschatological *dikaïosynē* does not come from works of the law, but from the faithfulness of the Messiah (Gal 2:15–16; cf. 3:21). This is not said as a denigration of Torah but a statement of fact that he and Cephas agree upon – one that Cephas needs to act consistently in line with, or else he risks leading the gentiles in Antioch astray. Paul’s problem with Cephas is that by withdrawing from eating with non-Jews, Cephas had sent mixed messages about the necessity of circumcision and Torah observance (i.e., “works of the law”) for non-Jews, which is contrary to what he and Paul actually believe.

To briefly summarize, Paul does not present himself as being at odds with other Jews over his teaching about the Torah. His points of disagreement with other Jewish groups in the Jesus movement about Torah revolve around the situation of non-Jews in the *ekklēsia* and how they relate to Jewish ancestral law.

## 2.2 Acts of the Apostles

As Isaac Oliver has convincingly proposed, in light of the knowledge the author of Luke-Acts (henceforth, “Luke”) has about Torah and the finer points of *halakhah*, it is more than likely the case that Luke was born and raised a Jew.<sup>18</sup>

62–3; Ryan D. Collman, “Just A Flesh Wound?: Reassessing Paul’s Supposed Indifference Toward Circumcision and Foreskin in 1 Cor 7:19, Gal 5:6, and 6:15,” *JJMJS* 8 (2021): 30–52.

<sup>15</sup> The exact identity of these men is unclear, but they are “from the circumcision” (i.e., Jews; Gal 2:12) and appear to be endowed with some authority from the Jerusalem *ekklēsia*. See J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1896), 112.

<sup>16</sup> On this phrase, see Matthew V. Novenson, “Did Paul Abandon Either Judaism or Monotheism?,” in *The New Cambridge Companion to St Paul*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 239–59, here 244–5.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of some of these texts, see Ruben Bühner’s essay in this volume.

<sup>18</sup> Isaac W. Oliver, *Torah Praxis after 70 CE*, WUNT 2/355 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck,



Thus, Luke's portrayal of Paul is an important point of contact for understanding how some Jewish followers of Jesus might have thought about Paul and the Torah. According to Joshua Jipp, Luke's portrayal of Paul is as a "faithful, Torah-observant Jew."<sup>19</sup> Throughout Luke's narrative, Luke consistently highlights how Paul acted in accordance with his ancestral laws and presents himself in his various speeches as a Jew who is faithful to his Jewish heritage and its major symbols (notably the Torah, the Temple, circumcision, and the people of Israel; Acts 16:3; 21:24–26; 22:3; 24:14, 17–18; 25:8; 28:17).<sup>20</sup> At a number of points in Acts, Paul is accused of disregarding the Torah and misleading Jews by teaching them to forsake the law of Moses, stop circumcising their sons, and abandon their ancestral customs (18:13; 21:21; cf. Acts 15:1–5). It appears as though Paul's teaching on circumcision, Torah, and non-Jews was misconstrued as being Paul's teaching on the Torah for everyone. Luke, however, presents these claims made by other Jews as being patently false. Jervell and Oliver even go as far as proposing that one of the purposes behind Luke writing Acts was to correct misconceptions about Paul, his teaching on the Torah, and his observance of his ancestral customs.<sup>21</sup> Luke the Jew raises no concerns about Paul's teaching on the Torah, but rather, portrays him as being wholly faithful to it. Neither Acts nor Paul's epistles present Paul's teaching on Torah in relationship to Jews to be an issue for Jewish followers of Jesus.

### 2.3 *The Ebionites (and Nazarenes)*

The Ebionites are the most notable named group of Jewish followers of Jesus that appear in our ancient sources.<sup>22</sup> While we have numerous accounts con-

2013), 447–8. Oliver uses the clever motto that Luke (and Matthew) are "Jewish till proven Gentile" (447) and even goes as far as claiming that "Luke the Gentile is dead" (450). In light of Oliver's arguments, the burden of proof is on those who claim Luke was a gentile, not those who understand him as a Jew. For a more traditional assessment of the identity of the author of Luke-Acts, see Walter Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, ZBK 3.1 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), 9; cf. François Bovon, *Das Evangelium Nach Lukas (Lk 1,1–9,50)*, EKKNT 3.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 22–3.

<sup>19</sup> Joshua W. Jipp, "The Paul of Acts: Proclaimer of the Hope of Israel or Teacher of Apostasy from Moses?," *NovT* 62 (2020): 60–78, esp. 62–4. Jipp correctly highlights the ambiguity concerning the content of the Torah and what constituted its proper observance (67 n. 27). On the law-observant Paul in Acts, see also the classic discussion in Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), esp. 153–83.

<sup>20</sup> Oliver (*Torah Praxis*, 230–4) also shows how Luke carefully constructs Paul's itinerary on a Jewish calendar, paying attention to feasts and festivals, and not traveling on the sabbath.

<sup>21</sup> Jervell, *Luke*, 16–7; Isaac W. Oliver, "The 'Historical Paul' and the Paul of Acts: Which Is More Jewish?," in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini, Carlos A. Segovia, and Cameron J. Doody (Fortress, 2016), 51–80, here 71.

<sup>22</sup> On the Ebionites, see Simon Calude Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 257–86; Oskar Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," in Skarsaune and Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 419–62; Sakari Häkkinen, "Ebionites," in *A Companion to*

cerning the Ebionites, all of the extant sources do not come from any self-proclaimed Ebionites, but rather from gentile-Christian heresiologists in the first handful of centuries after Jesus' death. Thus, the depiction of the Ebionites that has been preserved is not likely to be wholly accurate. It is possible – if not probable – that the name “Ebionite” became a heresiological tool that was used somewhat indiscriminately to describes groups of Jewish followers of Jesus (e.g., Origen, *Cels.* 2.1), what Joan Taylor calls an “‘Ebionite’ coalition.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, the Ebionites possibly became a category or type that these gentile-Christian authors used discursively in order to delegitimize forms of Christianity that appeared to be too Jewish and insufficiently Christian, and to legitimize their own theology.<sup>24</sup>

While there may have been an historical group(s) that was called the Ebionites, their own self-description likely differed from the heresiological ones that have been preserved. With these caveats in mind, for the purposes of this current study it is worth noting that the Ebionites are consistently portrayed as being Torah observant “in the Jewish manner” (e.g., circumcision, *kashrut*, Sabbath; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.2; Origen, *Cels.* 2.1; *Hom. Gen.* 3.5; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.34.2; 10.22.1; Pseudo-Tertullian, *Haer.* 3.3; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.2.2).<sup>25</sup> In addition to this, they are also said to have repudiated Paul for his apostasy from the law (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.2; Origen, *Cels.* 5.65; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.27.4). If there is a kernel of truth in these portrayals, then there could be evidence that some Jewish followers of Jesus – like the Jews in Acts 18:13 and 21:21 – rejected Paul's teaching on the Law. The details on why these groups disagreed with Paul's view of the law, and on what specific points, however, are “not that

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*Second-Century Christian “Heretics,”* ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, VCSup 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 247–78; Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects and Gospels*, VCSup 110 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Matt Jackson-McCabe, “Ebionites and Nazoraeans: Christians or Jews?” in *Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became Two*, edited by Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 2013), 187–205. See also the helpful discussion by Michael J. Kok in this present volume.

<sup>23</sup> Joan E. Taylor, “The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?” *VC* 44 (1990): 313–34, here 327. See also, Georg Strecker, “Zum Problem des Judentums” in Walter Baur, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, 2nd ed., BHT 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1964) 245–87, here 274–5; Gerd Lüdemann, *Paulus, der Heidenapostel*, vol. 2, FRLANT 130 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 258–60; Oskar Skarsaune, “The History of Jewish Believers in the Early Centuries – Perspectives and Framework,” in Skarsaune and Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 745–81, here 755. Cf., Jackson-McCabe, *Jewish Christianity*, 168–9.

<sup>24</sup> On the discursive function of the Ebionites in heresiological texts, see Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 207, 213–4.

<sup>25</sup> It is likely that these sources rely on each other and simply repeat and adapt this information for their own purposes. On this, see Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects*, 18–49.

easy to pinpoint.”<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, it is possible that the noted rejection of Paul may also be a feature that was invented by these heresiologists in order to further delegitimize and “other” these Jewish groups (historical or not).<sup>27</sup>

Like the Ebionites, the group of Jewish followers of Jesus known as the Nazarenes are portrayed as being adherents to the law, but that they did not repudiate Paul (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 29.7.5; Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 3.30 [on Isa 9:1]).<sup>28</sup> While identifying a historical group known as the Nazarenes suffers from the same pitfalls as the Ebionites, these two competing pictures of Jewish followers of Jesus and their stance toward Paul and the Torah may indicate that both positions existed in the ancient world. The problem, however, is that these accounts stand on shaky historical ground, and that they lack any detail on how they understood the specifics of Paul’s teaching about the Torah. As Michael Kok’s essay in this present volume notes, in all likelihood there were Jewish followers of Jesus that took a variety of positions regarding Paul’s teaching on the law. The problem is simply that these perspectives have not been preserved for us to access in any significant way.

#### 2.4 *The Pseudo-Clementine Epistula Petri*

The key text from the Pseudo-Clementine writings that highlights a deficiency in Paul’s teaching on Torah is *Epistula Petri* 2.<sup>29</sup> In this text, Peter claims that some gentiles have rejected his preaching on the law because of the “lawless and absurd doctrine of the man who is my enemy” (*Ep. Pet.* 2.3). Here, Paul is presented as Peter’s nemesis who has misled his gentiles concerning the law. Not only has Paul misled them concerning the law, but his words are being used as evidence that Peter himself rejected the law of Moses (2.4–7). As recently demonstrated by Kristine Ruffatto, in the *Epistula Petri*, Peter counters these claims by appealing to his fidelity to Moses and the Torah, which is used to legitimize his authority as a type of Moses.<sup>30</sup> Paul’s antinomianism, on the other hand, is used to show that his apostleship is illegitimate. Like some of the exam-

<sup>26</sup> Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 437.

<sup>27</sup> This is most evident in Epiphanius’ claim that the Ebionites believed that Paul was a Greek who only became a proselyte in order to marry a daughter of the high priest. It was only after Paul found out that he could not marry her, that he rejected the Jewish way of life he converted to and wrote against circumcision, sabbath, and the Torah (*Pan.* 30.16.8–9).

<sup>28</sup> On the Nazarenes and the very little we know about them, see Petri Luomanen, “Nazarenes,” in Marjanen and Luomanen, *Second-Century Christian “Heretics,”* 279–314; idem, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects.*

<sup>29</sup> On the Pseudo-Clementine writings and their usage in understanding ancient Jewish believers in Jesus, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ after the ‘Parting of the Ways’: Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *The Ways that Never Parted Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 189–231.

<sup>30</sup> Kristine J. Ruffatto, “Moses Typology for Peter in the *Epistula Petri* and the *Contestatio*,” *VC* 69 (2015): 345–67, here 351–2.

ples above, specific aspects of Paul's teaching on the Torah are not discussed, rather, Paul is simply painted as being against the Torah. The *Epistula Petri* shows that long after Paul's epistles and Acts were written, some Jewish followers of Jesus believed that Paul and Peter had major disagreements over the law, and that Paul was on the wrong side of their disagreement.

### 2.5 Interim Summary

The information we have regarding what Jewish followers of Jesus thought about Paul and the Torah is limited and not altogether clear. Based on these texts, all that can be confidently said at this point is that there is diversity amongst how some Jewish groups thought of aspects of Paul's teaching of the Torah. Notably, according to Paul and Luke, Paul's teaching on the Torah was within the acceptable range of interpretations. Later on, however – and perhaps after the rise of a majority gentile Jesus movement – for some Jewish followers of Jesus Paul's teaching on the Torah became associated with antinomianism and apostasy from the ancestral traditions.<sup>31</sup> For these individuals, their understanding of Paul's position on the Torah put him beyond the pale.

The task that remains for the rest of this essay is to discuss Paul's teaching on the Torah, which is the fullest account we have on the Torah from an early Jewish follower of Jesus.

## 3. Paul and the Torah, again

Paul is notoriously confusing on the Torah; to some, he is hopelessly so.<sup>32</sup> A simple glance at his epistles and this tension becomes abundantly clear. The same apostle who says, "all who are from the works of the law are under a curse" (Gal 3:10), can also list the possession of the law as one of the great privileges of Israel (Rom 9:4). The same apostle who says that the law is holy and *pneumatic* (Rom 7:12, 14) can also say that he died to the law (Gal 2:19). The same apostle who says that those who are led by the *pneuma* are not under the law (Gal 5:18) can also say that those who walk according to the *pneuma* fulfill the *dikaionoma* of the law (Rom 8:4). The same apostle who says the Messiah is the *telos* of the law (Rom 10:4), can also say that faithfulness does not overthrow the law, but, rather, validates the law (Rom 3:31). While it is impossible to fully deal with the issue of Paul and the law in such a short space – or perhaps in any length of space

<sup>31</sup> It is conceivable that the majority view of the majority-gentile church and church fathers on Paul and the Torah may have influenced what Jewish followers of Jesus thought about Paul's perspective on the Torah.

<sup>32</sup> Thus the classic argument of Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, WUNT 29 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983).

– I will attempt to highlight what I think is the underlying framework behind Paul’s variegated statements on the law.<sup>33</sup>

What, then, is Paul’s problem with the law?

### 3.1 *The Law and Human Corporeality*

To put it boldly, for Paul, there is no problem with the law. The law in and of itself is holy and *pneumatic* (Rom 7: 12, 14). The problem that exists is the corporeal condition of those for whom the law was given to regulate; not the law itself. Humans are made up of flesh, which is susceptible to impurity, corruption, and – ultimately – death. This physical corruptibility leads to moral corruptibility, and has given sin<sup>34</sup> the opportunity to take hold of humans and enslave them.<sup>35</sup> As Christine Hayes comments, this limitation of the law does not demonstrate that the law or the lawgiver are the problem, but the nature of the things that the law seeks to order are in some ways incapable of being ordered.<sup>36</sup> Despite the goodness of the law, it cannot resolve the issue of human mortality and corruptibility.<sup>37</sup> Or to put it in Paul’s words, the law was weakened by the flesh (Rom 8:3). God has, however, charted a course to overcome the flesh, sin, and death through the Messiah and the reception of divine *pneuma*.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> It must be noted that all of Paul’s teaching about the Torah occurs within his epistles written to a diverse group of assemblies and primarily address specific issues concerning ex-pagan, non-Jewish followers of Jesus within those assemblies. As Paula Fredriksen notes, “As a point of orientation for any interpretation, though, the audience of Paul’s remarks must always be kept in mind. All of his extant letters are addressed to gentiles. This means that, whatever Paul says about the Law, he says it first of all with reference to gentiles” (Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017], 130).

<sup>34</sup> On sin as a power/force, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Toward a Widescreen Edition,” *Int* 58 (2004): 229–40; Paula Fredriksen, *Sin: The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 32–5.

<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Meyer, *Adam’s Dust and Adam’s Glory in the Hodayot and the Letters of Paul: Rethinking Anthropogony and Theology*, NovTSup 168 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 214.

<sup>36</sup> Christine Hayes, *What’s Divine about Divine Law? Early Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 155–6. On this point, Hayes puts Paul into conversation with Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1137b10–28.

<sup>37</sup> David Moffitt notes that this thinking is also present in the book of Hebrews. David M. Moffitt, “Weak and Useless? Purity, the Mosaic Law, and Perfection in Hebrews,” in *Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. David Lincicum, Ruth Sheridan, and Charles M. Stang, WUNT 420 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 89–103, here 99.

<sup>38</sup> For recent studies that have informed my understanding of how Paul understands *pneuma* in contrast to *sarx*, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Stanley K. Stowers, “The Dilemma of Paul’s Physics: Features Stoic-Platonist or Platonist-Stoic?,” in *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 231–53; David A. Burnett, “A Neglected Deuteronomistic Scriptural Matrix for the Nature of the Resurrection Body in 1 Corinthians 15:39–42,” in *Scripture, Texts, and Tracings in 1 Corinthians*, ed. Linda L. Belleville and B.J. Oropeza (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2019), 187–211; cf. Matthias

If the law is unable to overcome human mortality, one might ask, why then the law (Gal 3:19)? Paul's answer is that it was given on account of transgressions.<sup>39</sup> Prior to the coming of the faithfulness of the Messiah, the law served as a pedagogue for Jews (Gal 3:23–25), to guard them and train them to live righteously.<sup>40</sup> Paul himself claims that his own guidance under the pedagogue was positive: in regard to *dikaiosynē* in the law, he was blameless (Phil 3:6). But this *dikaiosynē* is not enough; this *dikaiosynē* is unable to give one the kind of eschatological life that is linked to the *dikaiosynē* that comes from trust (Gal 3:21; Rom 9:30).<sup>41</sup> With the coming of the Messiah there was no longer a need for a pedagogue, because through the divine *pneuma*, Jews (as well as non-Jews) are no longer slaves to sin, but rather, are slaves to righteousness (Rom 6:16–19). To be a slave of sin is to exist in a state in which the law has dominion (cf. Rom 6:14).<sup>42</sup> “But since trust has come, we are no longer under a pedagogue” (Gal 3:25). “If you are led by the *pneuma*, you are not under the law” (Gal 5:18). It is in this way that Paul can say that he died to the law and now lives to God (Gal 2:19; cf. Rom 6:7–11). As Matthew Novenson comments, “Paul’s point about ‘dying to the law’ is not that the law makes for a bad kind of religion, but that the entire age of sin and death (over which the law exercised benevolent jurisdiction) is now over. ‘Living to God’ here refers not to Christianity (which Paul did not live to see), but to the immortal, pneumatic life of the age to come.”<sup>43</sup>

If one is no longer under the law or is dead to the law, one might ask, has the law been invalidated by trust (Rom 3:31)?<sup>44</sup> Of course not – *μη γένοιτο* – Paul says. The case is actually the opposite; “we maintain the validity of the law.” The difference is that they can now effortlessly fulfill the *dikaïoma* of the law because they walk by the divine *pneuma* and not by the flesh.<sup>45</sup> This is what

Klinghardt, “Himmlische Körper. Hintergrund und argumentative Funktion von 1 Kor 15,40f.,” *ZNW* 106 (2015): 216–44. For an alternative treatment of Paul’s understanding of *pneuma* and *sarx*, see Jörg Frey, “Flesh and Spirit in the Palestinian Jewish Sapiential Tradition and in the Qumran Texts: An Inquiry into the Background of Pauline Usage,” in Jörg Frey, *Qumran, Early Judaism, and New Testament Interpretation: Kleine Schriften III*, ed. Jacob Cerone, WUNT 424 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 701–41.

<sup>39</sup> Or “to add to transgressions.”

<sup>40</sup> On the pedagogue in the ancient world, see Norman H. Young, “Paidagogos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” *NovT* 29 (1987): 150–76.

<sup>41</sup> On these two types of *dikaiosynē*, see Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 8.2.2. I am indebted to Matthew Novenson for bringing this text to my attention.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Hayes, *Divine Law*, 159.

<sup>43</sup> Novenson, “Did Paul Abandon,” 248.

<sup>44</sup> On the law in Rom 3:19–31, see Yael Fisch, “The Origins of Oral Torah: A New Pauline Perspective,” *JSJ* 51 (2020): 43–66, here 50–3.

<sup>45</sup> Paul’s ethical teaching and praxis do not run counter to his ancestral law. He highlights the importance of keeping the commandments of God (1 Cor 7:19) and stands well-within a Jewish interpretive tradition when he summarizes the law by way of other commands, i.e., Lev 19:18 (cf. Philo, *Spec.* 2.63; Matt 7:12; 22:36–40 parr.; Jas 2:8; b. Shabb. 31a). “For all the Torah is fulfilled in a single word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:14). “For the one who loves the other has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit

Hayes refers to as “robo-righteousness.”<sup>46</sup> This is not a new idea foreign to Paul’s world, but was spoken long before him by the prophets.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:33–34 NRSV)

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. (Ezek 36:26–27 NRSV)<sup>47</sup>

For Paul, the long awaited day when natural, effortless observance of the law (however defined) had arrived with the resurrection of the Messiah and the sending of the divine *pneuma* to dwell in the mortal bodies of those who are in the Messiah (cf. Rom 8:9–11).

But this is not the end in Paul’s mind. Paul knows of a future existence when those in the Messiah no longer possess mortal bodies. What happens to the law then?

### 3.2 *The Law and the Messianic Age*

According to Paul’s calendar, the end of the present evil age (Gal 1:4) is imminent. It is so close, in fact, that Paul believes it is likely that he himself will live to see it (1 Thess 4:15–17; 1 Cor 15:51). Despite that he had been proclaiming this message for some time and the end had not come, he continued to hold fast to the impending return of the Messiah: “For now our deliverance is closer than when we first trusted; the night is gone, the day has drawn near” (Rom 13:11–12). When the ever-imminent end comes, and the world is transformed, Paul believes

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adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Rom 13:8–9). Does this act of summarizing the Torah count as diminishing it? Not according to the other ancient Jews who participated in the same activity.

On the usage of Lev 19:18 in Second Temple Judaism, see Kengo Akiyama, *The Love of Neighbour in Ancient Judaism: The Reception of Leviticus 19:18 in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Book of Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament*, AGJU 105 (Leiden: Brill, 2018). On the tradition of Jewish summaries of the law, see David Flusser, “The Ten Commandments and the New Testament,” in *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition*, ed. Ben-Zion Segal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 219–46; J. Cornelis de Vos, “Summarizing the Jewish Law in Antiquity: Examples from Aristaeas, Philo, and the New Testament” in *The Challenge of the Mosaic Torah in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Antti Laato (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 191–204. De Vos, however, argues that – in contrast to other Jewish summaries of the law – Paul places the law as secondary to the love commandment.

<sup>46</sup> Hayes, *Divine Law*, 47–51, 149, 161.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jub. 1:23–24.



that humans will shed their mortal bodies for an incorruptible, *pneumatic* existence that resembles the resurrected body of Jesus (1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21).<sup>48</sup>

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will change. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. Then the word that is written comes into being: "Death has been swallowed up in victory ..." (1 Cor 15:50–54)

What becomes of the law in the messianic age when death is no more and the resurrected righteous enjoy an immortal, incorruptible, *pneumatic* existence?<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately for us, Paul does not give us an explicit answer.<sup>50</sup> Others, however, have attempted to tease out the implications of this future state.

In his recent book on ritual purity in the Gospels, Matthew Thiessen comments: "Once humans become immortal, they can no longer become ritually impure: they are no longer marked by sexuality, susceptible to illness, or subject to death [...] If at some future point people no longer die, no longer become sick, and no longer need (or are even able) to reproduce, then the laws pertaining to ritual impurity are not abolished but have become immaterial."<sup>51</sup> On this reading, in the messianic age, aspects of the law lose their relevance because of a change in the nature of humanity.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, David Moffitt notes, "At least some of the Law's regulations will, therefore, go the way of the rest of the corruptible realm with which it is so closely bound [...] When there is no possibility of impurity from mortality, the need for rituals of bodily purification disap-

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Isa 25:8; 4 Ezra 7:97; 2 Bar 73–74; Qoh. Rab. 1.4.3 [citing Isa 25:8]. On the nature of the transformed and pneumatic body in Paul, see M. David Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology*, BZNW 187 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 127–36.

<sup>49</sup> For a variety of treatments of the law in the Messianic age, see W.D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come*, SBLMS 7 (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952); Peter Schäfer, "Die Torah der messianischen Zeit," ZNW 65 (1974): 27–42; Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1995); Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, WUNT 207 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 497–536; David Berger, "Torah and the Messianic Age: The Polemical and Exegetical History of a Rabbinic Text" in *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*, ed. David Engel, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Elliot R. Wolfson, JJTSup 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 169–87.

<sup>50</sup> Perhaps, however, this is what Paul is trying to communicate with his ever-puzzling phrase in Rom 10:4: "For the Messiah is the *telos* of the law unto *dikaïosynē* for all who trust."

<sup>51</sup> Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity Within First-Century Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 183.

<sup>52</sup> That certain laws are only applicable to particular types of bodies is already present in Paul's thought, namely circumcision. The law of circumcision does not apply to gentile bodies that are "the foreskin from nature" or "naturally foreskinned" (ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία; Rom 2:27). They can observe the laws of circumcision by simply existing as they are.



pears.”<sup>53</sup> Both Thiessen and Moffitt are keen to note that this is not supersessionism in the classic sense. The laws concerning ritual impurity (or food, or procreation, or death, etc.) are not done away with in the here and now because they are misguided, an undue burden, or a “bad kind of religion,” but in the future world of immortal, incorruptible, *pneumatic* existence they simply do not apply. The Torah continues to exist in the age to come – it is *pneumatic*, and therefore fit for this incorruptible age – but it just looks different.<sup>54</sup> It is easily conceivable to conclude that the author of 1 Cor 15 would assent to these conclusions. Whether or not – and to what extent – other Jewish followers of Jesus would hold to a similar vision of the future is unclear.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

I now return to where this essay began with the incisive study of Phillip Alexander. If, as Alexander proposes, that the Torah was akin to national symbol – a flag of sorts – does Paul’s discussion of and teaching about the Torah constitute a desecration of this flag in the eyes of his *syngeneis* in the Messiah? Does his teaching on the law put him beyond the pale? Our scant sources do not paint a uniform picture of what these groups thought of Paul and why. Undoubtedly some would find his teaching compelling and others would find him confusing or too radical, but a clear understanding of who these groups were and how they understood the details of Paul’s teaching on the Torah has been lost to history.

On my understanding of Paul and his relationship to the law, Paul remains faithful to the flag of the law. He does not desecrate it or repudiate it in any meaningful way. The majority of his interpreters throughout history, however, would disagree with me on this point. Perhaps the majority of the Jewish followers of Jesus that knew of Paul and his teaching would disagree with me too; we simply cannot know.

<sup>53</sup> Moffitt, “Weak and Useless?,” 102.

<sup>54</sup> It is not unprecedented in ancient Judaism for the Torah to change and evolve, or for the application of some laws to be overlooked or rendered obsolete (e.g., the death penalty for breaking the sabbath; Exod 31:14; Num 15:32–36). See, Hayes, *Divine Law*, 12–21; Alexander, “Jewish Law,” 53. While direct discussions of the law in the messianic age (or “age to come”) are effectively absent from our Second Temple sources, rabbinic literature offers more engagement with this question and shifting shape of Torah in the future (e.g., Lev. Rab. 9.7; Midr. Teh. 146.7; b. Shabb. 151b; Midr. Qoh. 2.1; 12.1). As Scholem notes, for the Rabbis, their theorizing on the Torah in the messianic age was “in purely imaginative fashion: in wishful dreams, in projections of the past upon the future, and in utopian images which relegated everything new to a time yet to come” (*Messianic Idea*, 52). For Paul, however, this was not the case. Given the outpouring of the *pneuma* and the transformation of pagans that he was witnessing, he believed he was living in the final moments of history; he was not theorizing about the end, he thought he was living in it.

<sup>55</sup> On Moffitt’s reading (“Weak and Useless?”), the author of Hebrews would have agreed with Paul on numerous points about the law.

# Abraham our Forefather and Herakles our Cousin

## Paul's Genealogical Reasoning and Jewish Narratives of Belonging

*Kathy Ehrensperger*

### 1. Introduction

Paul tries to clarify for his addressees from the nations how the Christ-event impinges on their identity, in referring to them as seed of Abraham, that is, to Abraham as their ancestor. He places them on the map or into the lineage of Abraham, by arguing that through Christ a genealogical link has been established which institutes them as co-heirs to the promises. Christ-followers from the nations found themselves in a liminal space since their place of belonging, individually and collectively was unclear when considered in light of the maps of belonging prevalent at the time. Via genealogical reasoning, Paul tries to place them into the lineage of belonging to the God of Israel, not in place of, but alongside the people Israel.

### 2. The Role of Genealogies in Greek, Roman, and Jewish Traditions

Genealogical narratives served a variety of purposes in cultures of antiquity. They were part of mapping the world through networks of kinship relationships. It is from the matrix of Jewish genealogical narratives Paul develops a genealogical narrative for Christ-following non-Jews. These narratives are far from being unique; they are the Jewish variation of perceiving relationships between groups and people prevalent among all peoples in antiquity. For the emerging Christ-movement the specific context to be considered is the Greek and Roman cultural and political world of which the Jews were part and with which they engaged in specific ways.

As I have argued elsewhere, genealogies served a number of purposes, beyond merely establishing or defining group identity. They mapped the world by presenting a network from the perspective of the respective people, who thereby set out commonality and difference, closeness and distance, enmity and friendship,

as well as superiority and power claims in relation to others.<sup>1</sup> As far as identity was concerned, genealogies mapped people not in terms of their essence, or characteristics but in terms of relational networks. Who a people was, was not something which emerged in isolation from others.<sup>2</sup> They expressed who they were in relation to whom they were related as kin. Relationality is thus core to the identity of peoples. To express who one is, is formulated in terms of networks and one's position within a network. Collective identity is relational – if considered in terms of genealogical narratives. It is not decisive whether these narratives were fact or fiction. Decisive is how they express the being in the world of peoples. In that sense they are expressing collective identity in relation to the other, confirming that “identity needs confirmation by the other, who is [...] part of the symbolic field that is established not least by narratives.”<sup>3</sup> This relational dimension does not just mean that one differentiates oneself from the other, it expresses both, commonality and difference in a dialectical process.<sup>4</sup>

For instance, the Roman narrative of their founding father, Aeneas, a refugee from Troy, although evidently fictional, expresses numerous aspects relevant for Roman identity and self-understanding: They were not Greek, since their origin was beyond the Greek world. The narrative of Aeneas moreover expresses core claims of Roman values: by carrying his father Anchises all the way from Troy to Rome, Aeneas lived the *pietas* owed to the ancestors, by carrying his family deity, he lived the *pietas* owed to the divine. The genealogical narrative of Aeneas came to play a crucial role in the version of Vergil, and the purpose it served in the ideological claims of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and their exercise of power.<sup>5</sup>

Genealogical narratives of course did not just emerge in Greek and Roman contexts, but throughout the Ancient Near East. Genealogical lists of the Hebrew Bible/LXX are part of this general tradition and share in the multiplicity of purposes mentioned. The lists in themselves present a network and thus map the world of Israel (e.g. Gen 10:1–32; 11:10–32; 25:1–18). The lists of these rela-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my “Narratives of Belonging: The Function of Paul’s Genealogical Reasoning,” *EC* 8:3 (2017): 373–92, now also in my *Searching Paul. Conversations with the Jewish Apostle to the Nations* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 229–46, esp. 233–37.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt has formulated this in a very accurate way, when she noted that human beings are by birth, or as she calls it due to their natality, interwoven in networks of human affairs. Cf. ref in Kämpf Heike, “Wer bist Du? Zur ethischen Dimension narrativer Identität,” *Ethica* 22:4 (2014): 315–26.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Müller-Funk, *The Architecture of Modern Culture. Towards a Narrative Cultural Theory* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Monika Fludernik, “Identity/Alterity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. Matthew Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 261.

<sup>5</sup> On the significance of the Virgil’s Aeneid for Roman imperial ideology see James R. Harrison, *Paul and Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 118–44, and Ian E. Rock, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans and Roman Imperialism: An Ideological Analysis of the Exordium (Romans 1.1–17)* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 55–65.

tionships are often filled with narratives, thus the mere mentioning of a representative of a people in a list does not yet sufficiently explain the implicit meaning. The mentioning of Moab and Ammon as related to Lot does not merely serve the stating of family relationships, but as a rationale that despite this relationship, they were either regarded as hostile towards Israel,<sup>6</sup> or Israel was admonished to keep their distance from Moab and Ammon, as they lived in regions which had been allotted to Lot when he and Abraham parted ways (Deut 2:1–22).<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, despite their relation, a distinction is made between Moab/Ammon, that is the sons of Abraham's nephew Lot and Edom/Esau, that is Abraham's grandson, brother of Jacob in LXX Deut 23:3–9. Whilst Moabites and Ammonites can never become part of the people Israel, not even after 10 generations, this is considered an option for Edom/Esau – in a three-generational process.

This pattern of Jewish genealogical narratives was not confined to the scriptures but expanded into the world after Alexander the Great. In negotiating the Greek cultural and political world, specific emphasis on certain relations with this world seemed to become more relevant. Although the worlds of Greece and later Rome were not absent from earlier genealogical maps (it appears that Japhet was interpreted as Greece already before the so-called Hellenization triggered by Alexander), Greek culture was not rejected, but Jewish traditions and identity were now also increasingly negotiated in relation to Greek traditions, in Greek language, and also in some cases related to Greek narratives. This process was not one of assimilation as it has often been described but a process of playing and not playing the game of acculturation – a game the Jews played on their own terms.<sup>8</sup> This is evident not least in Philo, but he is by no means the only one who could play on the keyboard of this instrument by playing his own tune. This is how Greek Jewish culture evolved, intelligible to some extent to their host regions and cities in the diaspora, but most of all integrating and retaining their own ways of life in majority societies. They lived in, and acculturated as Shem in the tent of Japhet.<sup>9</sup> Thus Philo presents Moses as the father of all philosophy, with all Greek philosophy actually emanating from the highest

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gen 19:30–38 and the narratives in Num 22–23.

<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there are numerous struggles, and battles between them, as with and against Edom, that is, Esau, the brother of Jacob/Israel. But the narratives clearly tell that God had allotted them the land which they inhabited, so it was not for Israel to claim it for themselves.

<sup>8</sup> I am following Tessa Rajak's excellent arguments here that the Greek translation of their scriptures "enabled this minority to have things two ways, both to play and not to play the game, both to take account of the prevailing power structure, engaging in a degree of measured acculturation, and at the same time, quietly, but most persistently, to assert their underlying independence." *Translation and Survival, The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>9</sup> James Kugel, ed., *Shem in the Tents of Japhet: Essays on the Encounter of Judaism and Hellenism* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

form of wisdom, that is the wisdom of Torah, with Moses as not merely a noble man, but close to God, a divine man, with philosophical insights unsurpassed. Although not genealogical in the sense outlined above, there is an element of genealogical reasoning in Philo's depiction of Moses, by making him and his wisdom the root of all philosophy. This is no small claim, given it comes from a people which is certainly not in the driving seat of political power, but utterly subjugated by Rome, not master of its own destiny in that sense, but a barbarian, enslaved people, as far as the Roman overlords were concerned. And at the time of Philo's writings, they were more or less in open competition with the population classified as Greek in Alexandria, for tax privileges.<sup>10</sup>

But not only Philo makes quite amazing claims of cultural interaction, also and not surprisingly, explicit genealogical narratives emerged expressing this cultural interaction. Josephus tells us that the great Greek hero Herakles had actually married into the lineage of Abraham. He refers to the work of some Cleodemus Malchus who reported that two of the sons Abraham had with Keturah, Apher and Aphran, fought together with Herakles against Anteus and Lybia, subduing these. Herakles subsequently marries a daughter of Apher, the granddaughter of Abraham. She became the "grand-mother" of African rulers. The name Africa, in this narrative derived from Apher and Aphran. With another of Abraham's sons, Assouri being the namesake of Assyria, links are claimed from Assyria to Africa and into the Greek world, with Herakles being firmly integrated into the genealogical narrative of Abraham.<sup>11</sup> This is not a story of Jewish assimilation to the Greek world but the other way round, it is a Jewish claim, an *interpretatio Judaica* of Greek traditions, similar to Philo's claim of Moses being the father of all philosophy.<sup>12</sup> Another fascinating connection is found in 1 Maccabees. According to 1 Macc 12:20–23, King Areus from Sparta had written to the Jewish high Priest Onias in the early third century BCE that he found a text which demonstrated that there existed a kinship relation between Spartans and Jews, since Abraham was the ancestor of both peoples. Later, the Hasmonean high Priest Jonathan wrote to the Spartans, acknowledging King Areus' letter and asked to renew the friendship between their peoples, addressing the Spartans as brothers. Further correspondence is recorded in 1 Macc 12:6–18 and 14:16–23. Josephus too knows of this tradition and refers to it in *A.J.* 12.225–226 and 13.164–170. The interesting aspect is not the historicity of such claims but the fact that they were made at all, obviously considered relevant, and indicating some positive relations, even an integration

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Sylvie Honigman, "The Ptolemaic and Roman Definitions of Social Categories and the Evolution of Judean Communal Identity in Egypt," in *Jewish and Christian Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Yair Fürstenberg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 23–74.

<sup>11</sup> Reported by Josephus in *A.J.* 1.239–241.

<sup>12</sup> Erich Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 151–3.

of others, in this case representatives of the Greek world, into Jewish narratives of belonging. Abraham is claimed to be the forefather of Spartans and Jews. Sparta had a specific reputation in the Greek world as a people whose military power was based on rigorous training, loyalty, tolerance of hardship, and adherence to ancestral laws. These were considered virtues held in high esteem, and Josephus claimed that in this regard the Jews even surpassed the Spartans.

Narrative genealogical links were not only forged into the Greek world but also to the south, with Abraham's son Ishmael being fashioned as linked to the Arab world. Although the Ishmael narrative in Genesis does not make any link to "Arabs" nor can any such link be found in the Hebrew Bible/LXX, it is stated in the book of Jubilees that descendants of Ishmael and his twelve sons lived in the regions of Babylon and up to the north-eastern part of the Nile Delta, and were called Arabs or Ishmaelites (Jub. 20:1, 11–13).<sup>13</sup> Josephus also knows of this tradition presenting an extended narrative: he locates the descendants of Ishmael from the Euphrates to the Red Sea, referring to this region as Nabatene and to the people there as Arabs (*A.J.* 1.220–221). Moreover, in another of Josephus' narratives God reminds Amram, Moses' father, that Abraham had given Arabia to Ishmael and his descendants (*A.J.* 2.213; also 1.239).<sup>14</sup> In these obviously widely circulating Jewish narratives the Arabs are kin to the Jews, via their ancestor Abraham. Nowhere in these traditions is the different lifestyle of the Ishmaelites/Arabs denigrated, it is merely stated, as already in the narrative of Genesis, that Ishmael represents a lifestyle as a nomad, outside agricultural land, a survivor in tough surroundings. He is different, attributed a different space to live by God who bestowed a blessing also to Ishmael, although one different from the blessing and promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The key to the call of Abraham is that God promises him that he will be the father of a people, will have space to live, and be blessed with fullness of life. However, core to these promises is God's commitment to Abraham and his σπέρμα (Isaac, and Jacob) to be their God. This is what the covenant of Genesis 17 is all about, affirmed again to Isaac and Jacob and eventually to the people Israel in the Exodus narrative. He commits himself to his people. Nowhere in these narratives do Abraham and subsequently his σπέρμα replace any other people to whom God would have committed himself before. God's call and commitment are unique to Abraham and his σπέρμα. Israel has been called into being by God. In and through this special relationship they are who they are. To

<sup>13</sup> This tradition is also found in the work of the Greek Jewish writer Artapanus (2nd century BCE, transmitted in Eus. PE 9.23.1) who notes that Joseph when quarrelling with his brothers turns to Arabs for him to be sent to Egypt. They comply with this wish because their kings are descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, brother of Isaac, that is, kin.

<sup>14</sup> Josephus also knows of a story concerning Joseph, and confirms the connection between Arabs and Jews with reference to circumcision, Jews circumcise their sons on the eighth day, in analogy to Isaac's circumcision, Arabs circumcise their sons when these are thirteen, like Ishmael.

refer to this as supersessionism is a grotesque distortion of the narrative of election and of the theological significance attributed to it. Supersessionism implies that a group and their identity and characteristics are taken over and replaced by another. Nothing of the kind is implied in the narratives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the people Israel.<sup>15</sup> The differences between Isaac and Jacob and other children of Abraham are just that, differences between kin. None of the children of Abraham replace another, they all have their place and space. The narratives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob express the specific relation and commitment of God to this lineage.

The narratives of genealogical connections indicate a self-perception of the Jews not as an autochthonous people but as a people interwoven in kinship networks, a migrant people who came from somewhere else (Ur of the Chaldeans), expressed in Deut 26:5 as “A wandering Aramean was my father.” Depending on the temporal and cultural context the kinship relations emphasized inclined more to the Greek context or to the east and south of the Greek influenced regions, but as Josephus indicates both, eastern and western cultural contexts were considered relevant by Jewish authors.<sup>16</sup>

So, to perceive one’s identity as a Jew, as part of this particular people, with its particular traditions, and being part of a wider kinship network was obviously not considered contradictory.<sup>17</sup> Jewish genealogical narratives saw the Jewish people through family ties connected to and as part of the Greek and Near Eastern worlds. These genealogical narratives, fictitious as they are, did not imply that those so related were all the same. To be part of a kinship network did not assimilate the so connected families to each other. They were distinctive family groups, with their own particular identity, and precisely as such they were seen as connected. Jews did not see themselves as isolated, or separatist. The connections did not threaten but express their particular identity. They expressed commonality, with a difference. Genealogical reasoning, the expression of one’s identity through kinship narratives was part of the fabric of Jewish tradition as

<sup>15</sup> Contra James M. Scott, *The Apocalyptic Letter to the Galatians, Paul and the Enochic Heritage* (Lanham, MD: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2021), 184–203.

<sup>16</sup> An interesting connection is made between Edom and Israel, the former becoming increasingly identified as Rome. That relationship is highly ambivalent as is the relationship between the brothers Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom. They are twin brothers, but at loggerheads with each other, family but marred by deception and threats on the one hand, and reconciliation on the other, but certainly on different paths. Possibly this led to the identification of Esau/Edom with Rome. The historical relationship between the Jews and Rome started on quite friendly terms, Rome being seen as an ally of the Hasmoneans in their fight against the Seleucids. Over time the relationship deteriorated up to the point of open war. Nevertheless, in some narratives the relationship was depicted not merely as an antagonistic one, Josephus seeing analogies in virtues between the Jewish and Roman peoples. Interestingly Philo also refers to Edom not in purely negative terms, an aspect to which I will return below/later.

<sup>17</sup> A detailed overview is presented in Erich Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

it was part of the fabric of the traditions of other peoples. It should thus not come as a surprise to find trajectories of such genealogical reasoning also in the Pauline letters. After all, he was involved in attempts to integrate pagans who had turned away from idols to the God of Israel via Christ into the narrative of belonging to this God.

### 3. The Lineage of Abraham

Paul himself is a prime example for Jewish genealogical reasoning. He asserts in Rom 11:1 *Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἀπόσωτο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ; μὴ γένοιτο καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ Ἰσραηλίτης εἰμί, ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ, φυλῆς Βενιαμὴν* ("I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin") and also in 2 Cor 11:22: *Εβραῖοί εἰσιν; καὶ γώ. Ἰσραηλιταὶ εἰσιν; καὶ γώ. σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ εἰσιν; καὶ γώ* ("Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I."). Moreover, in Phil 3:5, he emphasizes in addition that he is *περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμὴν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος*. He clearly identifies himself as a member of the covenantal community, one of the sons of Israel, of those who bear the sign of the covenant on their body, seed of Abraham, the lineage of the bearer of the promise. More specifically, he stresses that he belongs to the tribe of Benjamin, refers to some Hebrew heritage (whatever this precisely meant), and has been educated in the knowledge of the Torah. He clearly identifies himself in a Jewish way as part of the Jewish, covenant people. Such inner-Jewish genealogical reasoning was relevant as a way to express one's place within Jewish society.

Without being able to discuss this here in any detail, Paul's expression of belonging is a good example of what mattered in this respect: the lineage to Abraham expressed in eighth day circumcision, and thus a member of the house of Jacob/Israel. This marks him as a born Jew, son of a Jewish father and mother, a φύσει Ἰουδαῖος. He is literally a son of Abraham, Abraham is his ancestor.

To be considered part of this people that was called into being by God one had to be born to parents who performed the ritual of eighth day circumcision on their new-born son. This implies that one was born to parents who were descendants, that is, σπέρμα (seed) of the paradigmatic first man who had turned away from idols to serve exclusively the true and living God. God had committed himself in a covenant to be Abraham's and his descendants' God. (In a patriarchal patrilinear society this is the crucial aspect of the perception, girls and women would be what their father or husband was). This is the decisive point: Abraham and his seed were called to trust the one God. Their exclusive trust is the response to this call. God confirms his commitment in the unconditional covenant with Abraham and his seed, eighth day circumcision of sons being the



embodied sign of this covenant (Gen 17:10–14). The genealogical link to Abraham, and his seed, that is the lineage through Isaac and Jacob is what designates a Jew as a Jew by nature (φύσει Ἰουδαῖος Gal 2:15). It is not a genetic lineage as Abraham obviously had other sons. Rather, this is a covenantal or theological lineage, called into being by the one God. The promise of land, peoplehood and blessing is carried on through the child of the promise, Isaac and renewed to Jacob and his descendants. He is the one to whom the name Israel is given, after his struggle at the river Yabok (Gen 32:24–32). The theological or covenantal aspect is intrinsically intertwined with peoplehood, that is, the ethnic dimension of Israel as a people. To be part of this people Israel is not merely an issue of trust in the one God, but also of belonging to this people. To belong to this God and to belong to this people were one and the same thing. It is a both-and – in antiquity as it is today.

#### 4. Joining the Jewish People: The Question of Conversion

Since belonging to this people is not defined by a mere genetic perception of genealogy, the possibility of joining this people and her God was considered an option, at least this is what can be inferred from a number of texts of the Second Temple period. For the earlier period the situation is more complex, a concept of “conversion” cannot be found in the Hebrew Bible/LXX.<sup>18</sup>

What we do find in the Hebrew Bible/LXX are commandments concerning foreigners who live among the people Israel. They are referred to as *ger/prose-lyte* and in many respects are considered equal to the Israelites (Exod 12:48; 20:10; 23:9 etc.) especially if they underwent circumcision to participate in the Passover meal. A special case are slaves, who had to be circumcised as part of an Israelite household. But nowhere in the Hebrew Bible/LXX is this taken as an indication that these outsiders would by the rite of circumcision or any other rite transform from non-Jews into members of the people Israel, that is Israelites/Jews.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Benedikt Eckhardt notes with reference to Sir 44:20 that “We do not have comparable information from pre-Hasmonean times. Ben Sira seems to depict Abraham’s circumcision as the covenant cut into the flesh, but there is no hint at the possibility that non-Israelites could therefore cut the covenant into their own flesh as well.” (“An Idumean, that is a Half-Jew”: Idumeans and Herodians between Ancestry and Merit,” in *Jewish Identity between the Maccabees and Bar Kokhba. Norms, Normativity and Ritual*, ed. Benedikt Eckhardt [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 91–115, here 111.) Concerning the notion in 1 Maccabees he is of the view that “Although the text allows for apostate Jews to become gentiles by their own will, the possibility for gentiles to enter Judaism is not envisaged. Genealogical vocabulary abounds; the supposed relationship to the Spartans does not undermine this impression but strengthens it.” (Ibid. 112.)

<sup>19</sup> Whatever Paul opposes when he insists that non-Jews in Christ should not perform ἔργα νόμου (which I cannot discuss in this contribution), there clearly is no commandment in the

Sometimes it is argued that Ruth is an example of a convert when she commits herself to stay with Naomi after the death of her Israelite husband. However, in light of patriarchal notions of antiquity to apply the concept of conversion here would be anachronistic. It would have been a legal obligation for a wife to be loyal to the deities/deity of her husband. The noteworthy part in the story of Ruth is that she remained loyal to her deceased husband's God. That she eventually gets re-married within this family and thus remains loyal to their deity is a logical consequence of this rather than anything similar to conversion.<sup>20</sup>

Jacob Milgrom has specified that although the resident alien (גֵּר), could and in some cases should, undergo circumcision (cf. Exod 12:43–49) in order to participate in aspects of Israelite cultic life, he does thereby not become an Israelite. The key issue was holiness, which was a divine gift bestowed on the Israelites. Only members of the covenant community qualified as holy ones. Although the resident *ger/proselyte* was granted full civil rights and some participation in cultic life on equal par with born Jews/Israelites, holiness could never be transmitted to him. However, devoted he may have been in his loyalty to the God of Israel, however true he was in his Torah observance, he could not become holy.<sup>21</sup>

From the Hellenistic period onwards, the joining of the people Israel became an issue and thus the question of how or who could become a Jew, that is, a son of Israel/Jacob or member of the house of Jacob, was beginning to be debated.<sup>22</sup> The problem that arises when this option is considered in respective texts is the notion that non-Jews are sinners qua their loyalty to other deities than the God of Israel. This issue is addressed differently in different texts. The book of Jubilees for instance represents a view that this sinfulness affects gentiles to the ex-

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Torah which requires or assumes that a non-Jew who is being circumcised transforms into a Jew. Cf. Shaye D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness. Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 121. Cf. also my article "Identity Transformation in Christ: Struggling with 'ἐργα νόμου' in Paul", in *Parting of the Ways. The Variegated Ways of Separation between Jews and Christians and its Consequences for Modern Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, ed. Markus Oehler and Markus Tiwald (Vienna: University of Vienna Press, 2023) – and also Mark Nanos, "Re-Framing Paul's Opposition to Erga Nomou as 'Rites of a Custom' for Proselyte Conversion Completed by the Synecdoche 'Circumcision'," *JJMJS* 8 (2021): 75–115.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the respective Roman concept (Plutarch etc.) Also e.g. b. Yebam. 76a and b discusses Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh arguing that she had converted not for ulterior motives (in which case the conversion would be doubted), hence this was a legal marriage. Maimonides also argues in Mishneh Torah that the marriages of Solomon with foreign wives were possible because they had adopted loyalty to the deity of their husband, the problem being only that they then did not adhere to this loyalty and went back to their old ways, thereby to some extent also seducing Solomon, directly or indirectly. Hil. Issurei Biah 13:14–16.

<sup>21</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 248.

<sup>22</sup> It is not entirely clear what caused this debate, for a discussion see Eyal Regev, *The Hasmonians. Ideology, Archaeology, Identity* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), also Eckhardt, "An Idumean," 111–3.

tent that it becomes hereditary. This means that through idolatry non-Jews are so inherently polluted that no action can ever remove this sinfulness, thereby ruling out that any gentile could ever join the Jewish people. Although not arguing in a genetic way, it is a kind of genealogical reasoning which sees the transmission of sinfulness unavoidable and gentiles thus as permanently tainted.<sup>23</sup> This is an extreme way of dealing with a significant problem (in Jewish perspective). According to Christine Hayes a similar stance to the one expressed in *Jubilees* is found in the Qumran text 4QMMT. It views intermarriage as a source of impurity and thus an option not possible for members of the Qumran community, ruling out the option of the wife joining the group and thus the deity of her husband in a kind of “conversion” similar to the notion found in the book of Ruth.<sup>24</sup> Other Qumran texts such as 4QFlorilegium I, 3–4 share this approach. Here converts are listed together with non-Jews, and bastards as not being allowed to enter an anticipated future temple. However, the Temple Scroll (XII, 5; XL, 6) on the other hand notes with reference to LXX Deut 23:8–9 (“Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother, do not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land. Sons born to them of the third generation can enter into the community (ἐκκλησία/Qahal) of God”) that those joining the Jewish people can enter the Temple courts, although only the outside one, and this only after four generations, assuming that this is the generational span required for them to be fully integrated/socialized into the people.<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly Philo too discusses the status of proselytes in several texts, indicating openness to the option of an outsider, that is, former pagan joining the people Israel. Given his diasporic context he is not concerned with entry to the Temple, like the Qumran text, but in *Virt.* 102–108 he also discusses LXX Dtn 23:8, the welcoming of strangers generally and of Egyptians in particular. With reference to these having welcomed the people Israel hospitably (at least initially) they should be welcomed if they wished to live according to the way of life of the Jews. Noteworthy is the genealogical dimension of this welcoming. The proselyte should be welcomed and be regarded as equal to a born Jew as far as the Law is concerned. However, there is a limitation to this equality in that only the grandson of the proselyte would actually be welcomed into the assembly/

<sup>23</sup> See Christine Hayes’ detailed dealing with this issue in her *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), also Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 82–9. Martha Himmelfarb interprets the text differently as referring to the marriage of priest with women of non-priestly descent, “Levi, Pinehas, and the Problem of Intermarriage at the Time of the Maccabean Revolt,” *JSQ* 6 (1999): 1–24.

<sup>25</sup> Hannah Harrington, “Identity and Alterity in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Jewish Identity and Politics between the Maccabees and Bar Kockbah. Groups, Normativity, and Rituals*, ed. Benedikt Eckhardt (Leiden: Brill 2013), 71–89, here 79 n. 21.

ἐκκλησία of Israel, as only he would be considered a born Jew. This is an interesting variation to the theme and I think deserves further consideration. Philo does not spell out the reason for this generational span. There may be an assumption that actually only the son of Isaac was the son of a father who had been circumcised on the eighth day, and it was his son Jacob to whom the promise was affirmed and who eventually received the name Israel.<sup>26</sup> In *Spec.* 1.51–53 Philo also promotes the welcoming of proselytes, noting that they are equal in relation to the law, but caution should be exerted when one mentions other deities, as any negative talk might mislead proselytes to use similar language for the God to whom they just turned. Interestingly, Philo argues here with regard to their primary socialization. In some cases the notion of proselytes turning to the God of Israel is predicated on the notion of welcoming them into the *politeia* of the Jews, thus they become co-citizens (*Spec.* 1.51–52, 309) who are highly praised for the step of leaving familiar territory and networks to join a new one. The “laws” of this *polis* then apply to all equally. But this joining and welcoming of proselytes into the “politeia of the Jews” is not identical with their integration into the people Israel. Philo consistently refers to them as proselytes, and they are thus not part of the Ἰουδαίων ἔθνος, and thus cannot become part of the assembly of God (ἐκκλησία θεοῦ). One possible rationale for this might be the fact that they previously had been idolators. Although they had turned away from this wrong perception, they are perceived as still carrying this stigma and thus cannot enter the assembly of God, that is the holy assembly, and share in the word of God (λόγων θείων) (*Virt.* 108). The holiness required of the Ἰουδαίων ἔθνος cannot be transmitted via adult circumcision. There seems to be no other way to arrive at such holiness than via an inter-generational process.

Although Philo clearly argues for the welcoming of non-Jews, he nowhere claims that proselytes can join the assembly. With this emphasis Philo does not contradict himself in my view, he merely encourages the welcoming of proselytes, rather than their inclusion in the ἐκκλησία κυρίου, which in the text in *de Virtutibus* is restricted to the third generation of a proselyte family, making the inclusion into the ἐκκλησία/qahal of Israel dependent on a genealogical trajectory.

The fact that a similar perception of the possibility of joining the Jewish people is found in some Qumran texts as well as in Philo may be an indication that this might have been a quite widely held view and practice. This may also be the

<sup>26</sup> There could be an analogy also in Roman law in that a manumitted slave is not free in the same sense as a freeborn person. He remains a kind of bond-servant to his former master – is obligated to serve him, and unless he has more than three children, his possessions will go back to his master upon his death. Only the freeborn son can pass on his inheritance to his children without restrictions. For detailed discussion of this issue see Henrik Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 66–119 and also 248–78.

reason for Josephus' reference to Herod the Great as merely a half-Jew, an Idumean. This view may be due to the fact that there was a debate whether a sufficient number of generations had passed since Herod's ancestor's conversion. Clearly in the debate recorded by Josephus (*A.J.* 14.403) Antigonus questions Herod's Jewishness in genealogical terms and represents the view that doing something cannot make anyone a Jew. As Eckhardt notes "Circumcision is not enough, it can only create people somehow affiliated with, but clearly not belonging to, the people Israel. They are not transformed into *Ioudaioi* by this act."<sup>27</sup>

Was the third generation reckoned inclusively or exclusively? If inclusively then Herod was fully Jewish, if exclusively then only his children and grand-children would have been fully Jewish. According to the Qumranite standard for entering the Temple the question would concern the fourth generation. Interestingly, Josephus tells a story where precisely this question was raised with regard to Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great. There was a man, Simon, from Jerusalem, living faithfully according to the commandments, who at a meeting claimed that Agrippa was not holy (*ὅσιος*) and thus should be denied access to the Temple, since this was only allowed for people of proper descent (*εὐγένεσιν*) (*A.J.* 19.332–334).<sup>28</sup> The story ends with Simon being summoned by Agrippa to explain himself, whereupon he does not push the matter any further. The fact that the issue was raised at all, and is reported by Josephus points at least to a matter of debate along the lines indicated by Philo, as well as texts from Qumran.

Josephus reports a further discussion. In the passage in *A.J.* 20.17–53 about the sympathizer Izates we learn of different views of sages as to what is expected of such a sympathizer who wishes to abandon other gods and devote himself exclusively to the God of Israel. Although Josephus reports that Izates thought that by performing the rite of circumcision this would confirm his Jewishness, (*νομίζων τε μὴ ἂν εἶναι βεβαίως Ἰουδαῖος* *A.J.* 20.38), he does not actually say that Izates became a Jew, but referred to his way of life as following the Jewish ethos (*A.J.* 20.17). He also does not have the two advisors Ananias and Eleazar refer to Izates as a Jew, even after the latter had performed *τὸ ἔργον*/this rite.

The historicity of the narrative is not the issue here, but the fact that Josephus presents a debate over what ritual requirements should be completed if one wished to live a Jewish way of life, is evidence that he considered this switch of loyalty to the one God an option.<sup>29</sup> The story is about someone who is "zealous for another tradition" (*A.J.* 20.47), chooses to live a Jewish way of life and per-

<sup>27</sup> Eckhardt, "An Idumean," 114.

<sup>28</sup> See discussion in Daniel R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I. The Last King of Judea* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 124–30.

<sup>29</sup> For a thorough discussion see Mark D. Nanos, "The Question of Conceptualization: Qualifying Paul's Position on Circumcision in Dialogue with Josephus's Advisory to Izates,"

forms adult circumcision. This coheres with traditions of the scriptures where adult circumcision is required for strangers who live in the midst of the people Israel and participate in some of their customs. Coherent with these traditions, Josephus does not indicate that this transforms this man into a Jew.

The question that remains open is whether the act of circumcision is seen as transforming the gentile into a Jew, as in later rabbinic tradition or into a former pagan, a *ger/proselyte*. In the latter case circumcision is considered to enable close interaction between Jews and non-Jews in the land of Israel but would not render the *ger/proselyte* a Jew. Josephus does not provide details about this. What is evident is that joining the Jewish people is seen as a viable option, although it remains unclear at what point membership in the house of Jacob/Israel was evident.

Whether the most likely forced circumcision of Idumaeans and Iturians and their living according to the Jewish way of life (νόμος) under the Hasmoneans was a conversion is an open question and controversially debated.<sup>30</sup> More generally I think that the concept of conversion is not helpful for understanding the debates and processes concerning the status of non-Jews in relation to those born into Jewish families. As noted, the book of *Jubilees* witnesses to a view that becoming a Jew when one was not born one was impossible, Philo and some texts from Qumran indicate that people, Edomites and Egyptians in particular, willing to join should be welcomed, be equal with regard to the law, but only the third generation could join the ἐκκλησία, or only the fourth could enter the Temple court of Jewish men. And Josephus presents Izates and Helena in a positive light, especially since they become great benefactors of the Jewish people. But he does not refer to Izates as a Jew.

Hence the question whether circumcision was considered as transforming a non-Jew into a Jew maybe answered differently by different Jewish groups, and it is far from obvious that there was a widely held view that this would have been the normal perception. The situation comes closer to how Shaye D. Cohen described it “A gentile who engaged in ‘judaizing’ behavior may have been regarded as a Jew by gentiles, but as a gentile by Jews. A gentile who was accepted as a proselyte by one community may not have been so regarded by another. Nor should we assume that the proselytes of one community were necessarily treated like those of another, because the Jews of antiquity held a wide range of opinions about the degree to which the proselyte became just like the native born.”<sup>31</sup>

Inscriptions further testify to distinctions between born Jews and proselytes. Why would a proselyte indicate this if he or she were considered a *Ioudaios* –

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in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First Century to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 105–52.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Regev, *The Hasmoneans. Ideology*, 274–8.

<sup>31</sup> Shaye D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew,” *HTR* 82:1 (1989): 13–33, here 14.

without any further qualification? Shaye D. Cohen has drawn attention to all of these internal differentiations. He also notes that seen from outside, someone so joining a Jewish group may be seen and called a Jew by pagan neighbors, and might probably like to call themselves a Jew. Texts by Juvenal, Tacitus, Seneca, and Epictetus all indicate such outsiders' views. Juvenal in his 14<sup>th</sup> satire writes

Some happen to have had a father who respects the sabbath (*metuentem sabbata patrem*). They worship nothing except the clouds and spirit (or: deity) of the sky. They think there is no difference between pork, which their father abstained from, and human flesh. In time, they get rid of their foreskins. And with their habit of despising the laws of Rome, they study, observe, and revere the Judaic code, as handed down by Moses in his mystic scroll, which tells them not to show the way to anyone except a fellow worshipper and if asked, to take only the circumcised to the fountain. But it's the father who is to blame, taking every seventh day as a day of laziness and separate from ordinary life.<sup>32</sup>

The father here seems to be a sympathizer, rather than a proselyte, although this is difficult to ascertain, the son however certainly is depicted as further integrated, whether fully however again cannot be confirmed. Tacitus writes that the Jews "instituted the circumcision of the genitalia in order to be recognizable by their difference. Those who cross over into their tradition of life adopt the same practice, and, before anything else, are instructed to despise the gods, disown their native land, and regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account" (*Histories* 5.5.2). These non-Jewish literary sources evidence to the historicity of non-Jews adopting Jewish practices but it remains unclear whether they were seen as Jews even by them.

In light of these primary texts, I consider it questionable that there existed a concept of conversion in Second Temple Judaism.<sup>33</sup> All the examples mentioned above, except *Jubilees*, provide evidence for some openness to welcoming former pagans into Jewish communities, and for them to judaize, that is, live according to a Jewish way of life. But this is not evidence that they "converted" to Judaism or were considered Jews, that is, Bnei Israel/Jacob.<sup>34</sup> The evidence points in a different direction – to an inter-generational process through which outsiders eventually become part of the people Israel.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Sat.* 14.96–106; trans. S. Morton Braund, LCL, 465–7.

<sup>33</sup> Paula Fredriksen notes with regard to Juvenal *Sat.* 14.96–102 "that Juvenal has no word for 'conversion,' instead using the language of deserting the *romanas leges* for foreign laws, the *ius* of Moses." *Paul, the Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 67; see also her "Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins Whose Time Has Come to Go," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 35:2 (2006): 231–46.

<sup>34</sup> This is also the case with the often referred to examples of Esther and Judith (LXX *Esth* 8:17, *Jdt* 14:10). Cf. Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 39. Most recently the discussion by Katell Berthelot, "To Convert or not to Convert: The Appropriation of Jewish Rituals, Customs and Beliefs by Non-Jews," in *Lived Religion in the Ancient World. Approaching Religious Transformations from Archaeology, History, and Classics*, ed. Valentino Gasparini et.al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 493–515.

<sup>35</sup> That the integration of non-members of a specific group could be a process which



*Excursus: Rabbinical Traditions*

The later rabbinical rules for people who wished to join the people Israel differ fundamentally. The rabbis decided that it was possible to become a Jew through a process of conversion which required teaching of the commandments, an immersion ritual and for men circumcision, and in principle an offering. Upon completion of the process the person was considered as of equal standing to someone born a Jew. He was considered a new creation, like a newborn baby with all his previous life being completely irrelevant, including his family ties (b. Yebam. 22a, 48b).<sup>36</sup> He is like adopted into a new family, a step which affects questions such as inheritance, and marriage. Rabbinical concepts of conversion may differ in certain details, but they all considered a person thus joining the Jewish people to be Jews in almost every respect. However, despite such a person being equal to born Jews, some rabbinical texts attribute significance to the fact that their parents had not been Jews. In some texts the convert is considered as adopted by Abraham, that is, through their conversion they are now Abraham's children. This does not render them Bnei Israel (sons of Israel) however, and rabbis thus argued they could for instance not say the words in Deut 26:3 "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us." But instead, he should say "to give to the fathers of Israel." And in prayers which include "God of our fathers" he should say "God of your fathers."<sup>37</sup> Hence, they postulate that a certain distinction between a born Jew and a convert is maintained. The issue is further debat-

spanned over a number of generations is also found in the Roman process of the manumission of slaves. Although their status could change in that they could become freedmen, the stigma of slavery never left them. Moreover, they remained indebted to their former master, now their patron, in that they were obligated to render him services as required. Only the freeborn sons of freedmen would not carry that stigma of slavery with them anymore. This had implications also in terms of inheritance laws, the right to pass on possessions to the next generation was limited for freedmen, e.g. their sons could only inherit if the freedman had more than three freeborn children, otherwise the former master, now patron had the right to inherit from the freedman. If the freedman had been the slave of a Roman citizen he would get Roman citizenship, but of a secondary class. Also, marriage into the senatorial class was not possible for freedpersons. For a detailed discussion of the status of freedmen see Henrik Mouritsen's excellent monograph *The Freedmen in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. also Claude Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul Two Essays* (London: Max Goschen, 1914), 200.

<sup>37</sup> m. Bik. 1.4

- A. These [people] bring [firstfruits] but do not recite:
- B. a proselyte brings but does not recite,
- C. because he is not able to say, "[I have come into the land] which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us," (Dt. 26:3).
- D. But if his mother was an Israelite, he brings and recites.
- E. And when he [the proselyte] prays in private, he says, "God of the fathers
- F. And when he prays in the synagogue, he says, "God of your fathers."
- G. [But] if his mother was an Israelite, he says, "God of our fathers."



ed in the Jerusalem Talmud, where an argument for a different perception is proposed in that it is understood that the name change of Abraham from Avram to Abraham actually indicates that he is also the father of goyim, understood here as converts, as distinct from born Jews (y. Bik. 1.4, 64a). In later rabbinical traditions, such as Genesis Rabbah the notion that the convert is actually created emerges (Gen Rab. 39.14) and in the Babylonian Talmud the notion that the convert is a newborn child nurtured by Sarah, and Sarah thus being their mother can be found (b. Yebam. 22a, 97b). In these later rabbinical texts the notion that the convert is integrated into the lineage of Abraham, and thus is genealogically integrated via adoption or the notion of “new creation” into the people Israel indicates the importance attributed to lineage as expression of belonging to Israel in rabbinical tradition. Katell Berthelot is of the view, that this may be due to the influence of the Roman concept of adoption.<sup>38</sup> This may well be the case, although the changed political situation after 70 CE and especially after 132 CE possibly played a part in this one generation process of conversion as well. Since the Romans had an interest to identify who was a Jew for tax purposes, people at the margins or of unclear status could possibly not be tolerated anymore. One could not be in a transitional or liminal state anymore over generations, but had to either be a Jew or a pagan. Further research into this would be interesting but is beyond the scope of this contribution.

## 5. The Transformation of Gentile Sinners according to Paul

The question of Paul’s genealogical reasoning thus needs to be considered in light of this context. Since, as argued above, no act or ritual, not even adult circumcision, could transform a former pagan into a Jew, integrating him into the lineage of Abraham and thus transforming him into a Ben Israel, who was part of the ἐκκλησία/qahal of the people Israel, part of the people to whom the promises apply, how was it possible that such a person could arrive at a “right” standing in relation to the God of Israel? There would have been a number of reasons why Paul might have considered this to be a pressing issue. Since he was convinced that he and his contemporaries lived under the conditions of the imminent in-breaking of the end time, there was no time for an inter-generational process to join the Jewish people except as proselytes (not as Jews). And for the same chronometrical reason Paul considered it necessary that now that the messianic time was beginning to dawn, people from the nations would join the people Israel in worshipping God, because it had been revealed that he was the God

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Katell Berthelot, “Entre octroi de la citoyenneté et adoption: Les modèles pour penser la conversion au judaïsme à l’époque romaine,” *Pallas. Revue d’études antiques* 104 (2017): 37–50.

not of the Jews only but also of the nations.<sup>39</sup> How thus was it possible that a “gentile sinner” (ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλός Gal 2:15) could be transformed and become a full member of the ἐκκλησία θεοῦ, part of the holy community who worshipped the one God together with his people Israel, in these eschatological times ?

Since in antiquity kinship relations and relationships to the divine world were intrinsically linked, or as Paula Fredriksen has formulated, “gods and humans form family groups,”<sup>40</sup> it was inconceivable to commit in exclusive loyalty to the one God of Israel without having a kinship connection to the people to whom this God already had committed himself in an irrevocable covenant. Loyalty to a deity was not merely a matter of belief, it was not a religious act in the modern sense, it involved cult practice, and to participate in this one had to be part of the respective kinship group.<sup>41</sup> The polytheistic nature of all except the Jewish exclusive relation to their God, does not contradict this kinship aspect, as the relation to the gods of the family or clan would never be substituted with the worshipping of deities of other peoples, these would just be integrated into one’s own pantheon. However, this was not an option if one wanted to be loyal exclusively to the God of Israel, hence integration into the kinship group was decisive.

Paul develops a narrative of identity for those from the nations in Christ via two paradigms, adoption as sons/υιοθεσία and transformation into σπέρμα Abraham. The latter clearly falls into the category of genealogy, but the former only appears to present a genealogical argument. I will first briefly turn to the notion of adoption – followed by an analysis of Paul’s genealogical reasoning through the σπέρμα Abraham argument.

### 5.1 Adoption as Sons

It has been widely argued that Paul’s use of adoption language with regard to non-Jews’ status in relation to the God of Israel, predominantly draws on the Roman legal concept of adoption.<sup>42</sup> It may well be that the adoption metaphors

<sup>39</sup> Worshipping means λατρεία, that is Temple worship which means cult performance including sacrifices. This happened only in the Temple in Jerusalem, and was performed by priests on behalf of all Israel, that is, the ἐκκλησία θεοῦ, the assembly of God. So, for non-Jews to worship with Israel, they had to somehow become part of this assembly – in Paul’s view without becoming part of Israel.

<sup>40</sup> Fredriksen, *Paul the Pagans’ Apostle*, 151.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Patrick McMurray, *Sacrifice, Brotherhood, and the Body: Abraham and the Nations in Romans* (Lanham, MD: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2021), 229–34.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in its Social and Political Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Seon Kyu Kim, “Another Look at Adoption in Roman 8:15 in Light of Roman Social Practices and Legal Rules,” *BTB* 44:3 (2014): 133–43; Walters, James C. (rev. by Jerry Sumney), “Paul, Adoption, and Inheritance,” in *Paul and the Greco-Roman World. A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2003), 33–67.

in Romans and Galatians resonate for his gentile addressees with the Roman concept. However, I am not convinced that this is the primary analogy from which Paul draws. Firstly, it is not accurate to claim that there was no notion of adoption in Jewish traditions of the time. But a process of transforming a gentile sinner into a Jew via adoption into the lineage of Abraham is not attested in texts of the Second Temple period. This is not to say that the notion of adoption cannot be found in Jewish traditions, although not in the sense of transforming a non-Jew/gentile into a Jew, nor in the sense of integrating someone into one's lineage for inheritance purposes.<sup>43</sup>

But there are narratives of belonging which depict the coming into being of the people Israel in the vein of what looks like an adoption. She was a foundling of unknown origins, taken care of and raised by God (Hos 11:1; Ezek 16; Deut 32:9–11). It is through his love and call that Israel is Israel, called into being through God initiating a relationship with her and committing himself to her in his unconditional covenant. The narratives of Abraham as well as of Hosea (Hos 11:1–4) tell the story of this coming into being of the people Israel and God's binding commitment to her, whether this is expressed in contractual terms, as in the Abraham narratives of Genesis, or in the image of an adopting parent and child as in Hosea.<sup>44</sup> With adoption, fatherhood, caring for Israel like for a child, and calling into being, different images are used in narratives of belonging or identity in Jewish scriptural traditions.<sup>45</sup> As Jon Levinson summarizes "Israel is not a nation like any other [...] the new people only comes into existence through God's promise to Abram, a childless man with a barren wife. Israel [...] never had an identity unconnected to the God who called it into existence in the beginning and who has graciously sustained it ever after."<sup>46</sup>

The image of the father-child relationship is also found in Second Temple literature: in Jub. 1:24a–25 God says to Moses "I will become their father and they will become my children. All of them will be called children of the living God." This seems to indicate that some kind of adoption notion lies in this formulation. Moreover, the image of God as father is also found in Wis 11:10 "For these you put to the test like a father giving a warning." Ben Sira calls on God "O Lord, Father and God of my life" (Sir 23:4), and Philo, especially when referring to God the Creator often in one breath also refers to him as father.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the image of God as father to his people continues to be relevant during

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Walters and Sumney, "Paul, Adoption and Inheritance," 36.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the similar image with regard to Jerusalem in Ezek 16:2–14.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. also Mal 2:10; Isa 43:6–7; 64:7; Jer 3:19; Deut 32:6; cf. also 2 Sam 7:14.

<sup>46</sup> Jon Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham. The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 22. Levenson also draws attention to the image found in Ezek 16 where Jerusalem is the child of a mixed marriage "or unknown provenance, abandoned and adopted by God taking the place of the lost parent" (22–3).

<sup>47</sup> *Opif.* 7, 10, 21, 46, 56, 74, 75, 77, 84, 89, 135; *Leg.* 1.18, 64; 2.67 etc.

the Second Temple period, and although the term υἱοθεσία cannot be found in this literature, this does not mean that the notion is absent. James M. Scott and Jeffrey Tigay have convincingly demonstrated that other terms express the same aspect as a metaphor for the relationship of God with Abraham or with the people Israel. As one of numerous examples, Scott discusses Philo, *Sobr.* 56 in particular where Abraham is depicted as God's first-born son, in what is evidently an adoption process (he made him his first-born son).<sup>48</sup>

To refer to God as father of his children, that is, the people Israel, is not exceptional but it is not drafted primarily on the notion of adoption in the sense of the Roman concept.<sup>49</sup> In these Jewish perceptions those adopted by God are not integrated into a divine genealogical lineage. God is not their father κατὰ σάρκα or φύσει. Through his call they came into being. By this acquisition, Israel becomes God's inheritance, they are his portion in the world, marked by this special relationship (Deut 32:9). Although inheritance language plays an important role in this relationship it is not linked with these parental images.

Inheritance is of course a decisive genealogical aspect in the Roman concept and actually the main purpose of adoption: the adoptee becomes part of the direct genealogical lineage of the adopter, predominantly to become his heir, and when the adoptee is a person *sui iuris*, that is an adult who is not under the *potestas* of a *paterfamilias*, he also takes on the duty for the adopter's deities. He genealogically becomes his son, and thus inherits his estates etc. including the duties towards the family deities.<sup>50</sup> These are certainly aspects which resonate with Paul's addressees given their Roman context especially in Romans, and also in Galatians as significant recent research demonstrates.<sup>51</sup> However, the relevance of Jewish notions of "sonship of God" has too lightly been dismissed in my view. I doubt that the perception of Roman adoption is the most helpful for understanding Paul's use of the metaphor. The emphasis on the "spirit of sonship/adoption as sons" in Rom 8:15 does not refer to a new genealogy for the addressees, via adoption by God.<sup>52</sup> The image of sonship (υἱοθεσία), or children

<sup>48</sup> μόνος γὰρ εὐγενὴς ἄτε θεὸν ἐπιγεγραμμένος πατέρα καὶ γεγονώς εἰσποιητὸς αὐτῷ μόνος υἱός (*Sobr.* 56). Scott interprets this as an image for the adoption of proselytes by God. I am doubtful whether this generalization from Abraham to proselytes can be made, as Abraham although with a paradigmatic function for non-Jews, is presented here as unique, rather than as an example. James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of Huiiothesia in the Pauline Corpus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 62–117.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. e.g., Jeffrey Tigay, "Adoption," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, 1:209–11.

<sup>50</sup> For details of the Roman adoption procedures see Kim, "Another look at Adoption in Romans 8.15," Hugh Lindsay, *Adoption in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> Robert B. Lewis, *Paul's Spirit of Adoption in its Roman Imperial Context* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2016).

<sup>52</sup> This is Johnson Hodge's argument. Although I appreciate her work in many ways, the images of adoption and seed are intermingled in her work which I think is problematic. She states "indeed the spirit, or pneuma is crucial in this process: it grants the gentiles a new an-

of God presents a relational metaphor indeed, but it is not genealogical. The starting point for Paul's use of this metaphor is slavery, or rather the spirit of fear associated with slavery. It is more likely rooted in the Exodus narrative, the narrative shaping the identity of the people Israel as being redeemed from slavery to be God's firstborn son (Exod 4:22), rather than in genealogical narratives. Thus, the move from slavery to sonship is the key narrative paradigm of the identity of the people Israel.<sup>53</sup> Paul uses this paradigm now also for gentile Christ-followers, not as a replacement of Israel but in analogy to God's people Israel. Paul, by addressing gentiles refers to their slavery to sin, that is, their bondage to distorted passions, due to their distorted worshipping of idols (Rom 1:18–25). From this, they are freed in that now in Christ they are adopted as sons and thus empowered by the spirit of sonship. The sonship is linked to inheritance both in Rom 8:12–25 and Gal 4:1–7, indicating that this adoption has beneficial implications for those now so related to the one God.<sup>54</sup> Here, Paul's metaphor comes closest to Roman notions, without in my view being identical with such. It has been argued that this might refer to inheriting the Kingdom of God – as Paul at several points refers to those “who cannot/will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21; 1 Cor 6:9–10).<sup>55</sup> An indication possibly relevant for this can be found in 2 Cor 6:16–18 where Paul refers to a number of scriptural texts:

I will live in them and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.  
17 Therefore come out from them,  
and be separate from them, says the Lord,  
and touch nothing unclean;  
then I will welcome you,  
18 and I will be your father,  
and you shall be my sons and daughters,  
says the Lord Almighty.

This affirmation is the core of their inheritance, this is God's commitment to them now also. This commitment is the reason why they, now in and through

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cestry, a new kinship with the God of Israel.” (*If Sons, Then Heirs. A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 72.)

<sup>53</sup> Cf. John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity. A Tradition-Historical and Exegetical Examination* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 288; idem, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix 2008), 86; although with a different emphasis also Sylvia Keesmaat, *Paul and his Story. (Re)interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> In Rom 8:17 one could even consider that this is a subjective genitive – so those so adopted are now also part of God's inheritance – as is often also noted for the people Israel LXX Deut 32:9; LXX Ps 27:9; 32:12; 74:2; 77:71; 94:14; 105:40; LXX Mic 7:14; LXX Joel 3:2; LXX Isa 19:25; 47:6; 63:17; LXX Jer 2:7; 12:14; 27:119.

<sup>55</sup> An interesting note is found in 1 Thess 2:12 where Paul reminds his addressees that God calls them “into his own kingdom and glory.”

Christ, like the people Israel already, are freed from slavery, sons and heirs and as such not under the dominion of any other power anymore. They inherit the promise that they will live in the realm of God's power.

Thus, the notion of adoption as sons in Paul is a relational metaphor, resonating with Jewish notions of God's relationship with his people, it is part of Israel's narrative of identity as the people belonging to God. Whether they are seen as called, a foundling, an infant whom God raised for himself, his portion, his inheritance in his creation – all of these images are part of this narrative. As Paul emphasizes in Rom 9:4 to them (Israel) belong ... the υιοθεσία etc. – not in the past tense, as if they had lost their sonship, but in the present tense. God's continued commitment to them is irrevocable. But now those in Christ are also adopted as sons. Alongside the people Israel, not in replacing Israel.

This kind of υιοθεσία did not and does not create a lineage in the vein that the narrative of Aeneas creates a genealogical lineage for the Roman people, that links them and in a more specific claim, the Julio-Flavian clan, to the goddess Venus. Nor is it analogous with the most prevalent purpose of the Roman concept of adoption, that is the repositioning of a family member in the family lineage. Roman adoptions were hardly adoptions of outsiders. They were rather shifts in genealogies, in that in the absence or loss of a direct heir, another family member was moved into this position. The most that was possible was that a close friend or the son of close friend could be adopted for that purpose. The Roman concept of adoption aimed at filling the vacant space of an heir.<sup>56</sup> It was an elitist affair, and hardly ever would a freedman, even less, a slave be adopted as son and heir.<sup>57</sup> Paul, however, argues precisely that, that former slaves have now received the spirit of adoption as sons. Those so adopted as children of God do not move into a vacant space, they are not replacing an heir, they are co-heirs with Christ and through him with those who already have the υιοθεσία, the status as adopted children of God, Israel. Together they are heirs.

Paul's adoption metaphor resonates with the Roman practice and purpose of adoption in a limited way and should primarily be heard from within Jewish narratives and metaphors. A key distinction to the Roman notion is the absence of a genealogical link with God. Paul's image of non-Jews in Christ as being adopted by God and thus participating in his inheritance (or now being also part of his inheritance) is one of the metaphors Paul uses to formulate the transition of non-Jews in Christ from the slavery of idolatry to now belonging to the one God. They are now also God's portion, but they are not integrated into a divine genealogy. Like in the parenting metaphors for Israel's relation to God,

<sup>56</sup> Hugh Lindsay notes that "Although there is no hope of raising statistics or telling examples, adoptions aimed solely at providing heirs would normally occur within close degrees of relationship or from amongst family friends of suitable standing." (*Adoption in the Roman World* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 134.)

<sup>57</sup> See the detailed discussion in Lindsay, *Adoption*, esp. 123–37.

the distinction between God and humans, the Creator and Creation is clearly maintained. There is no genealogical link to God. The emphasis of the parent metaphor lies on the loving, caring relationship of God with his people.

The metaphor should thus not be mingled with the other image linked to inheritance, the one which associates these non-Jews in Christ with Abraham as his σπέρμα. With this narrative a genealogical link is indeed created for non-Jews in Christ.

## 5.2 *Seed of Abraham*

Significantly, Paul does not use the adoption image when he explains to his addressees in Rom 4 and Gal 3:29 that they are seed of Abraham, and thus heirs to the promise. This is what might be expected but is absent from Paul's genealogical reasoning in relation to the gentiles' integration into the lineage of Abraham.<sup>58</sup> They are adopted children of God in Paul – and not adopted children or adopted seed of Abraham!

Of course, the link to Abraham is decisive. Paul demonstrates in a discourse of genealogical reasoning that by becoming part of the lineage of Abraham these non-Jews in Christ qualify as heirs to the promise, but precisely not via adoption. Paul does argue genealogically to express how they belong to this God, but not through genealogical reasoning in relation to God but in relation to Abraham. The affirmation that they are now – also – σπέρμα Abraham is the confirmation of the promise to Abraham that is designated to be the ancestor/father of many nations (Rom 4:17). Abraham of course is in one sense already the father of many nations, through Ishmael as well through Esau and their descendants. And the mythological link to the Spartans which is reported in 1 Maccabees and Josephus is possibly an extension of this perception. But none of these descendants are called Abraham's σπέρμα as Paul differentiates in Rom 9:7 "not all of Abraham's τέκνα are his σπέρμα." Σπέρμα Αβραάμ does not denote merely a genealogical ancestry as I have argued in detail elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> According to the narratives of Genesis, Abraham and his σπέρμα are the recipients of the specific covenant promises and this renders them also the bearers of the promises (Gen 15:1–6 and 17:1–9; also Gen 28:13–15). Only they are the recipients and bearers of God's pledge that he will be their God, that they will be his people, or as noted above, they are his portion and inheritance. This inherently and explicitly includes the promise of blessing, that is, fullness of life for Abraham and his σπέρμα. For this to be possible they are promised a place to live, living space; and through them or in their name the nations will also be blessed.

<sup>58</sup> There is no trajectory from Paul's use of the adoption image to the later rabbinical notion of converts as being adopted children of Abraham. Contra Berthelot's argument in her otherwise illuminating article, "Entre octroi de la citoyenneté et adoption," 49.

<sup>59</sup> Ehrensperger, "Narratives of Belonging," 373–92, 382–91.



To be σπέρμα Abraham has a specific genealogical connotation, related to promise and inheritance. The genealogical link for those from the nations is established for them via Christ. As σπέρμα David (Rom 1:3) Christ is part of the genealogical lineage of σπέρμα Abraham. As such he represents the hopes of the people Israel, the trust that despite indications to the contrary God is faithful to his covenant commitment. This commitment confirmed in Christ has implications also for those from the nations (Rom 15:8–9). They belong to Christ in that they have responded in trust (ὕπακοή πίστεως) to God's call in Christ. This links them to Christ's πίστις and thus genealogically to Abraham's πίστις. As such they are σπέρμα Abraham, in the realm of Christ. God's call and their response places them in the realm of Christ and thus of the promise to Abraham and his σπέρμα. Christ is the key link but not a means in itself (Gal 3:29). He is the means through whom those from the nations have access to the promises.<sup>60</sup> This does not mean that they thereby become part of Israel, nor do they replace Israel. They are not transformed in Christ into sons of Israel, that is, members of the house of Jacob/Israel.<sup>61</sup> They belong to God through Christ as those from the nations. As such they are associated to the people Israel, but becoming part of the lineage of Abraham in Christ does not integrate them into Israel.<sup>62</sup> The emphasis on Abraham's trust in God, as the God who creates life where there is death (Rom 4:17) obviously resonates with God's action in the vindicating resurrection of Christ. The initiation of eschatological events in the resurrection of Christ initiates also the inclusion of those who like Abraham turned to the one God in trust (πίστις), now as gentile recipients and bearers of the promise. This is the implication of being σπέρμα Abraham. This link is created for them via Christ, not via adoption (ὕιοθεσία) into Abraham's lineage. Becoming Abraham's σπέρμα is intertwined with Christ's πίστις, the gentiles' trust,

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Ryan Schellenberg, "Seed of Abraham? Universality and Ethnicity in Paul," *Direction* 44:1 (2015): 16–29.

<sup>61</sup> Although Schellenberg makes a compelling argument concerning Christ as the link for non-Jews, his conclusion that they become thereby part of Israel is problematic. No non-Jew is integrated into Israel, they are if anything associated to Israel, possibly as associated people of God, kind of cousins of Israel, but they do not become part of the house of Jacob. Contra Schellenberg, "Seed of Abraham," 21.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Campbell who argues that "non-Jews, even as seed of Abraham, are not part of the covenant and do not keep Torah as do those within the covenant [...] They need to learn about, and are related to, the traditions of Israel, but it is through Christ alone that they become σπέρμα. This relation to Abraham via Christ prevents *ethne* being accorded the title 'Israel'." And further "to participate in the promises of Abraham, those from the nations require not only a connection with Christ but also via Christ (rather than via circumcision) to Abraham. This is how they have access to the Abrahamic promises; this is how they become children of God, as *other peoples* [...] without becoming part of Israel." (*The Nations in the Divine Economy: Paul's Covenantal Hermeneutics and Participation in Christ* [Lanham, MD: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2018], 235–6). Cf. also his *Romans: A Social-Identity Commentary* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2022); and Paula Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52, here 243.



and the spirit.<sup>63</sup> In and through Christ those from the nations thus become co-heirs of the promise. They are not self-standing heirs. Through Christ they are intrinsically linked with those who are σπέρμα ἐκ τοῦ νόμου. As Paul notes in Rom 4:16b εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι, οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ, ὃς ἐστὶν πατὴρ πάντων ἡμῶν. Abraham is thus the father of both, those ἐκ τοῦ νόμου and those ἐκ πίστεως. Only together with σπέρμα ἐκ τοῦ νόμου can those from the nations be heirs to the promise.

In Jewish perception, as noted, there were peoples who were part of the genealogy of Abraham without being considered his σπέρμα. Before the Christ event, inclusion into the lineage of Abraham's σπέρμα, that is the lineage of promise, was only possible via joining the people Israel – requiring a three generational process as noted above. Thus, God's commitment to Abraham and his σπέρμα as their God, providing for them his blessing in terms of peoplehood and living space, could not be inherited by the one former pagan who initiated the process of joining the people Israel. This commitment only fully applied to the third generation, those who were the grandsons of the one who turned away from idols to the true and living God. The proselyte himself could not become part of the ἐκκλησία of God, the assembly of the holy ones.<sup>64</sup> Only later generations were possibly considered as not affected by the idolatry of their grandfathers, as they were the sons of fathers who should never have committed idolatry. However, Paul is convinced that now, at the dawning of the messianic age, something had happened in and through Christ that rendered these former idolater purified, and thus holy so they could become part of the eschatological assembly of God ἐκκλησία θεοῦ, as those from the nations, that is, as eschatologically purified gentiles. Now that the messianic age was beginning to dawn, they were called into existence by God's grace as σπέρμα Abraham from the nations. It is decisive that they remain just that, σπέρμα Abraham from the nations, since God had begun to reveal himself as God of both, Israel and the nations. As σπέρμα Abraham from the nations they inherit the promise that God will be their God also, not in the place of Israel but alongside or associated with Israel. Again, unlike in the Roman practice of adoption no one is replaced in this genealogical integration.

A number of aspects are woven together by Paul in this emerging narrative of belonging for non-Jews who through association with Christ now were also σπέρμα Abraham, holy seed. They are ransomed from the debt accumulated by

<sup>63</sup> I cannot enter the debate about πίστις Χριστοῦ, but am inclined to agree, e.g., with Stephen Young's arguments in his article "Paul's Ethnic Discourse on 'Faith': Christ's Faithfulness and Gentile Access to the Judean God in Romans 3.21–5.1," *HTR* 108:1 (2015): 30–51.

<sup>64</sup> The reason for this was likely the pollution through idolatry that was considered as permeating them. As a former slave to sin, an idolator could not become holy. This is clearly the perception in the Book of Jubilees as noted above.

idolatry, as one of the images Paul uses to show what the Christ-event meant for them “You were bought with a price ...” (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23). There are a number of other images through which Paul tries to clarify the implications of the Christ-event. The core aspect is that those from the nations are called into being as people who belong to the God of Israel as precisely that – people from the nations. Not to replace Israel, but to join Israel, as those who had turned away from idols. Their narrative inclusion as σπέρμα Abraham integrates them genealogically into a new network of belonging, a network of which Israel is already part. In analogy to the narratives of Abraham, Hosea, Ezekiel, the Exodus for Israel, the narrative of these non-Jews in Christ is the narrative of their coming into being as an additional people of God.

## 6. Conclusions

Paul is treading new territory in his endeavor to formulate a narrative of belonging for those from the nations in Christ. It is a narrative that is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, with the innovative dimension that images, visions and hopes expressed in scriptural and Second Temple Jewish texts concerning the worshipping of God by non-Jewish people is seen as now being actualized in and through the Christ-event. The integration into the lineage of Abraham, as σπέρμα Abraham is thereby one of the images Paul uses to explain how these non-Jews in Christ are now integrated into the narrative of belonging of the God of Israel who had revealed himself now also as God of the nations. It serves the purpose of clarifying how they can be heirs to the promise made to Abraham and his σπέρμα – that God will be their God also.

Another image is that of υιοθεσία. It also is linked to the notion of inheritance, but the emphasis is on the transition of these gentiles in Christ from being slaves (to sin) to being sons (and daughters) of God. This does not stand in contradiction to the image of genealogical integration into the lineage of Abraham. It is a different image, emphasizing a different aspect of the narrative of belonging to Christ. Common to both of these images is the dimension of inheritance. By becoming σπέρμα, Abraham or by receiving the status of sonship through adoption they become heirs to the promise, but significantly co-heirs, not sole heirs.

They are in that sense new creation. They are now through their inclusion into the lineage of σπέρμα Abraham also holy. Belonging to God means that they were called through Christ to be holy (Lev 19:2). This is what to be heirs to the promise implies in my view. Not merely that they are called to belong, and to inherit something, but that this call asks for a response, ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, a trustful response. Thus, to be heir to the promise, σπέρμα, means to become a promise bearer, to live according to this promise, to live life as Paul formulates, as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). To be σπέρμα Abraham, alongside God’s apple

of the eye Jacob/Israel, includes to live in association with them, according to the ways of the Lord. If Abraham and his σπέρμα are heirs to the κόσμος, this inheritance is now also entrusted to those from the nations in Christ. This is the eschatological hope. Although they live in this hope and trust, they also live in the not yet, thus patiently awaiting its full revelation. For now, they are entrusted with this promise, which is both, gift as well as task, alongside and together with God's people Israel.

# Paul and Synagogues

*Janelle Peters*

## 1. Introduction

Named the first Poet Laureate of England in 1668, John Dryden mused about ways to govern states in *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681):

Nor only crowds, but Sanhedrins may be  
Infected with this public lunacy,  
And share the madness of rebellious times,  
To murder monarchs for imagined crimes (788–791).

A man who oscillated between rival camps like Paul, Dryden touches on the interplay between elitist and populist politics and the tenuous nature of political control, using the metaphor of the Sanhedrin to describe councils contemporary to him. Certainly, we can validate this interpretation of the Sanhedrin as competing with the voice of the populace for Roman favor. There are analogous dynamics during the Jewish Revolt, which was when an ethnic group within the Roman Empire and its laws tried to reassert its independence. Moments of intra-Jewish violence such as Jesus's Temple episode and Paul's floggings suggest the Roman hegemony that exerted itself on Jewish processes. We see this in the primary sources themselves in places such as the intervention in Acts of Paul's nephew to have the Romans save Paul from in-transit murder of Paul by a group of Jews attempting to thwart Jewish religious legal processes. Similar cautions appear by Paul himself in 1 Corinthians, where he urges those in the house-churches to avoid taking each other before secular courts.

In this paper, I will argue that Paul's understanding of group regulation derives partially from contemporary synagogues both in Judea and in the diaspora. While the Sanhedrin attracts the most attention in the gospels as it indicates the importance of Jesus and his impending execution by the Romans, smaller disputes could have been settled based on halakha by teachers in synagogues, just as Jesus routinely fielded such questions as whether divorce was permitted and Paul defined sexual immorality. None of these bodies would have had the power to overthrow the Roman emperor or Roman taxation, but they would have exerted significant influence over the life decisions of those who came to consult them. Moreover, we know that individuals like Paul willingly submitted themselves to punishments meted out by Jewish associations such as the 39

lashes. While shocking to modern sensibilities, Paul lived in a time when corporal punishment was still present in schools, and other Mediterranean associations like the “Mysteries” could whip individuals and otherwise enact violence upon their bodies in a way that would not alarm Roman authorities. Even in Jerusalem, Peter seems to have been able to flout certain Jewish customs with the problem of his conscience being the bigger threat than physical violence. With several Jewish circles eschewing strongly delineated codes of corporal punishment (e.g., Jesus’ following, Qumran, and the Therapeutae), the occasional instances of bodily punishment could possibly have been reserved in synagogues for extreme cases such as that of Paul. It surely must not have been very often that a trained Pharisee decided that a fellow human was the resurrected Christ of the God of Israel, given the relative scarcity of thaumaturges compared to other forms of ecstatic behavior such as engaging in prophecy.

## 2. Synagogues in Judaism during the Second Temple period

Before considering the role of Paul in the synagogue, we should first review the possibilities for Jewish gatherings in Judea and in the diaspora in the first century C.E. Paul, having heard about Jesus long prior to his conversion, could have encountered the message of Christ first in one of the synagogues or Judean/Jewish gatherings he frequented. However, his actual conversion is said to take place outside the Jewish community in any instantiation and on the road to Damascus. In our sources from Christ-followers, the synagogue is situated apart from conversion to following Christ as much as those within it can occasionally hear a message about Christ and become sympathetic to following Christ. The synagogue has a place in first-century Christian experience, but it has a role that is often independent of the experience of those following Christ. Philo’s Therapeutae might share with Christians certain synagogal configurations, but there is considerable variation among what might be considered as a synagogue apart from reading Scripture and having an interest in a Jewish community that need not be coterminous with Rome.

### 2.1 *What Constitutes a Judean/Jewish Gathering?*

There were many avenues for Jewish expression in the early imperial Roman period, according to our sources. Most Jewish groups, including those that followed Jesus, held positive views of the Temple.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the Temple was not avail-

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<sup>1</sup> Eyal Regev has argued that “there is reason to believe that the actual attitude towards the Temple displayed by Peter, Paul, and James was not very different from that of their fellow Jews.” See Eyal Regev, “Temple Concerns and High-Priestly Prosecutions from Peter to James: Between Narrative and History,” *NTS* 57 (2009): 64–89, here 88.

able for quotidian expressions of piety, and Jewish groups varied widely in how they construed faithful observance to be practiced.<sup>2</sup> Philo was an Alexandrian Jewish man of considerable status and leadership experience, and his writings preserve groups such as the Therapeutae where men and women come together during a communal meal in order to recreate distinctionless creation, arranging themselves for Torah instruction based on age.<sup>3</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls contain the rules for structured membership within the spiritual group. Jesus considered himself to be an itinerant Jewish teacher who held classes in the Temple, synagogues, and countryside. Richard Ascough points out that the term “synagogue” could be used by non-Judean groups as well as Judean groups, leading to some confusion about what constitutes authentic and appropriate synagogue behavior and Jewish/Judean affiliation.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, non-Judeans could have joined those originally from Judean groups in Judea or the diaspora in synagogues with varying levels of acculturation and leadership. In such variety, who would be in charge of deciding what was authentic Judean practice?

At the same time, our sources also suggest that there was an attempt to define Judaism by Romans for the purposes of allowing gatherings. Both Philo (*Legat.* 311–313, 316) and Josephus (*A.J.* 14.213–216, 14.235, 14.259–260) inform us that Jews were accorded privileges during the early Roman imperial period based on their ancestral customs.<sup>5</sup> In Acts 23, the only reason that Paul is diverted from going before another session with the Sanhedrin, a Jewish disciplinary body, is that his nephew knows of a credible threat on the part of some Jews to deal with Paul themselves. Before the Sanhedrin, Paul has described himself as a “Pharisee” who is the “son of Pharisees,” and he garners some support from among “some scribes of the Pharisees” for his claim that charges are being brought against him for his “hope in the resurrection,” with or without belief in Jesus in a manner that could be consistent with Dan 12. Though Luke does not develop the erudition of Paul within the space of this chapter in Acts, the Lucan inclusion of Paul’s knowledge of Pharisaic tradition contrasts with other early Christian traditions about the lack of training of Jesus (John 7:15), John the Baptist (John 3:26), and the apostles. The Roman interference in Jewish legal processes at the end of Acts functions positively and suggests that the earliest Christian groups influenced by Paul allowed some degree of outsider negotiation of what constituted appropriate Jewish expression and legal reach.

<sup>2</sup> Notably, Daniel Boyarin has suggested that Justin Martyr invents the category of Judaism in a more systematic way than previously existed during the time of Jesus and Paul. See Daniel Boyarin, “Justin Martyr Invents Judaism,” *Church History* 70 (2001): 427–61.

<sup>3</sup> Philo, *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*, 75–91.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Ascough, “Paul, Synagogues, and Associations: Reframing the Question of Models for Pauline Christ Groups,” *JJMJS* 2 (2015): 27–52, here 51.

<sup>5</sup> Philo and Josephus differ somewhat in that Philo agrees with the Hellenistic book of Judith that conversion to being Judean may happen, where Josephus might not. See Shaye J.D. Cohen, “Respect for Judaism by Gentiles According to Josephus,” *HTR* 80 (1987): 409–30.

Nonetheless, it seems that Roman influence over synagogues was kept to a minimum. In the Gospel of Luke, as Judith Lieu notes, Jesus is able to teach in synagogues freely in both Luke's received material and Luke's own editing. Moreover, strong local control over synagogues precludes overarching imperial intrusions. Luke has a Luke emphasizes Jesus' preaching and teaching in the synagogues both in his own material. Luke knows of a mere Roman centurion who builds a synagogue (7:5), without any type of Roman administrator. Lieu further notes the Lucan highlight of Jairus is a ruler of the synagogue (8:41).<sup>6</sup>

Dining and worship feature commonly in descriptions of Jewish worship activities of the Second Temple period in Judea and in the diaspora. Jesus notably has to admonish Martha not to spend all her time cooking but to come to participate in the learning activity of the impromptu gathering (Luke 10:41). At Qumran, Room 77 has been identified as a synagogue on the basis of its apparent dining and worship remains. Due to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have an indication that the liturgy at Qumran extended past the prophet-Law debate of Jesus scholarship to include prayers, psalms and hymns. Qumran's worship connection of dining and hymns seems to match that of the Therapeutae in Egypt, suggesting that the divide between Judea and the diaspora has been overstated. While the coming together of the genders of the Therapeutae demonstrates the lack of a women's section in the ancient synagogue, it doesn't automatically mean that all synagogues, including that at Qumran, interpreted the Genesis creation stories as a primary constitutive feature of their worship gatherings, as in 1 Corinthians where Paul explicitly cites creational norms to justify veiling norms. What does seem to be the case is that dining and food were connected to some degree in Jewish worship settings during the early imperial Roman period in places that included the synagogue. Moreover, dining and worship joined together to form a commensal experience that reinforced a notion of Judean belonging.

Alternate spaces for Jewish worship practice were not merely participating in the same Jewish worship culture, but they could directly compete with Temple hegemony on occasion. Several sources suggest that the place of the Jerusalem Temple and any affiliated synagogues was challenged by several groups. Qumran, of course, has been believed to have been established by a Jewish movement seeking to distance itself from the Jerusalem Temple elite and to restart Jewish spirituality in the desert. In the Gospel of John, we find a memory of the Samaritan Temple, which was destroyed in an attempt to force Samaritans to adopt the Jerusalem Temple. The Fourth Gospel's Jesus preaches in a Capernaum synagogue about the "bread of life" (John 6:25–59) after he exhorts the Samaritan woman with "living water" she will not have to repeatedly go to the well to draw. The idea that the Samaritan woman may stop laboring so hard to collect

<sup>6</sup> Judith Lieu, "Temple and Synagogue in John," *NTS* 45 (1999): 51–69, here 58–9.

water suggests that there is at least some awareness within the text that rituals are costly in terms of time and labor. Moreover, while it is inevitable that some of the later recounted prophecies about the Temple reflected the post-70 reality, there is nonetheless a possibility that the prophecies about the Temple already would be logical given the general ongoing discussion about rethinking the Temple found in groups such as that at Qumran.

## 2.2 *Synagogues*

Main features of Second Temple synagogues seem to be the Torah reading and hymns, which necessitated benches, the Torah ark, and ark veil. As Jodi Magness notes, it was possible to convert spaces into synagogues by adding benches. At Masada and Herodium, rebels converted available spaces to continue worshipping during the revolt.<sup>7</sup> Numerous depictions of synagogue Torah shrines show veils serving a ritual function for the ark, perhaps indicating a conceptual connection between the Temple and synagogues as prayer houses.

Presumably, synagogal meetings that did not have a dedicated space would have at least occasionally had ritual elements connected with Torah reading and prayer, much like early Christian house-churches.<sup>8</sup> There is the important caveat that there are many synagogues and churches that we simply cannot clearly see in our texts, so it is difficult to tell in our texts when a Jewish or Christian meeting is being mentioned or what practices might have gone on to delineate a standard such meeting. In 1 Peter, for instance, it is not clear whether the feminine “co-elect” refers to a female liturgical worker or the church.<sup>9</sup>

It also seems that simply because a group of Jews has gathered to discuss halakic matters there does not need to be a presumption that said group is governed by any synagogue. The gospels depict Jesus interacting with Pharisees and other groups of Jews who do not belong to a shul and claim the authority of one particular rabbi as many modern Jews do. In the gospels, Jesus’ disciples, the Pharisees, and other Jews are free to go to synagogues and the Temple without being strictly defined by any one synagogue. Moreover, policing of purity boundaries in Judea happens not only at the levels of the Sanhedrin and Judean synagogue, but also at the level of the more liminal practitioner, as evidenced by the martyrdom of Stephen which Luke says occurs because of discontent from the “Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia)” (Acts 6:9).<sup>10</sup> This lack of a well-delineated chain of authority

<sup>7</sup> Jodi Magness, *Masada: From Jewish Revolt to Modern Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 171.

<sup>8</sup> Howard Clark Kee, “The Changing Meaning of Synagogue: A Response to Richard Oster,” *NTS* 40 (1994): 281–3.

<sup>9</sup> Judith K. Applegate, “The Co-Elect Woman of 1 Peter,” *NTS* 38 (1992): 587–604.

<sup>10</sup> Markus Oehler has recently argued that synagogues in Judea would have had more corporal authority than those in the diaspora. Here, we find a possible nuance in that those con-



is perhaps what leads to so many skirmishes over correct interpretation, in addition to genuine enthusiasm for Jewish legal interpretation in quotidian spaces and the overarching popularity of the Pharisees.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.3 *Synagogues as Distinct from the Temple*

Synagogues were a space of learning, discussion, and debate, but they did not present the same avenue for public protest as the Temple. Like Jesus' public protest of finances at the Temple, Baba b. Buta drove animals into the Temple to protest high prices in Jerusalem (*t. Hag.* 2.11). Various figures affiliated with Judaism may go into synagogues to speak, but there is not physical protest involving animals at synagogues. This would seem to indicate that the Temple retained a separate ritual function synagogues did not have prior to its destruction and that synagogues did not acquire after its destruction. As distinct worship spaces or itinerant gatherings, synagogues seem not to have been permeated by Roman influence to the same extent as the Temple.

## 3. Paul in Jewish/Judean Gatherings

Paul believes that the Judean ethnicity of those in Christian assemblies persists after distinctionless baptism, but he also holds that former pagans do not have to adopt all of the practices of Judaism to be saved. It seems that he might have represented a centrist position, as some groups within his assemblies advocated circumcision while other groups thought they could visit pagan prostitutes and eat meat sacrificed to idols. Although Paul goes to the synagogue to preach, he does not seem to welcome synagogue leaders into the house-churches as fellow clergy of equal standing, similar to Jesus's healing of synagogue leaders' households but restraint from engaging synagogue officials publicly as equals. As Paul seems to voluntarily present himself to these Jewish groups in Judea and elsewhere (e.g., Acts 13:13–43), it is little wonder that he falls within their disciplinary jurisdiction, just as other followers of Jesus faced "being handed over to the synedria and beaten in synagogues" (Mark 13:9). While certainly synagogues would have more legal authority over Paul in Judea, the picture in Acts

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sidered foreign to Judea are still able to exercise jurisdiction in bringing people before religious authorities such as high priests and elders. Markus Oehler, "The Punishment of Thirty-Nine Lashes (2 Corinthians 11:24) and the Place of Paul in Judaism," *JBL* 140 (2021): 623–40.

<sup>11</sup> Joel Marcus notes that Matthew says that the Pharisees have members whose authority allows them to "sit in Moses' seat" (Matt 23:1–10) and that John claims Pharisaic authority extends to regulating the member list of the synagogue (John 12:42). Such Pharisaic authority is corroborated by Josephus (*A.J.* 13.288, 298, 400–404; 18.15) and the Nahum Peshar (4Qp-Nah 2, 4, 8; 3, 7–8). Joel Marcus, "Birkat Ha-Minim Revisited," *NTS* 55 (2009): 523–51, here 531.

13 of the leading women and men of the city ousting the apostle from the territory after he spoke at the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia seems to suggest that the apostle could face bodily discipline from the synagogue either in Judea or in the diaspora.

If we compare Paul with Peter, we note that Peter does not have as many halakhic departures from what is presumed to be normal observance of Jewish customs according to Paul, Luke-Acts, and other sources. If we compare them with Jesus, it seems that the debate over working on the Sabbath does not feature in the ministries of Peter and Paul in the same way as that of Jesus, though this could be a post-70 development for Jesus in the case of gospels that came from predominantly Jewish communities that also followed Christ and began to experience competing demands as the Christian movement became more established.<sup>12</sup>

Already within the early Jesus movement, there is language distinct from the synagogue in the term “apostle,” which is shared among Paul, the evangelists, and many other early Christian authors. While Paul must narrate his conversion story after Jesus already appeared to the Twelve, the need for apostolic apology evidently does not extend to co-workers such as Junia. Certainly, later church tradition continues this understanding of an apostle in places, such as John Chrysostom’s claim that the Samaritan woman “exhibited the actions of an Apostle, preaching the Gospel to all, and calling them to Jesus, and drawing a whole city forth to him.”

Richard Last proposes that Paul joined with Aquila and Priscilla in a synagogue of tentmakers as all three are explicitly identified with that trade in Acts 18:1–3. However, the synagogue in which they worship is not claimed to be comprised only of tentmakers, and the house-church at Corinth has members that visit prostitutes and have dinner invitations at what might be other associations, whether Jewish or non-Jewish. Just as we see Paul participate in a number of different synagogal worship activities, his house-churches could have been affiliated with multiple synagogues without having challenging any of their Judean commitments or new beliefs as a result of their exposure to Paul, Prisca, or Aquila.<sup>13</sup> While they may not have made the same financial contribution at every synagogue or house-church, they certainly would have been able to share in the communal life of multiple associations, regardless of ethnicity, occupation, or religious configuration. If the report of Josephus is correct that societies (*thiasoi*) from Judea were the only Caesar permitted to collect funds and have common meals in gatherings, then the incentive to have a Judean affil-

<sup>12</sup> Martinus C. Boer notes that sabbath observance contributed to the expulsion of Jesus followers from the synagogue in John 9:22 (380). Martinus C. De Boer, “Expulsion from the Synagogue: J.L. Martyn’s History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel Revisited,” *NTS* 66 (2020): 367–91.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Last, “The Other Synagogues,” *JSJ* 47 (2016): 330–63.

iation in groups that might have emphasized ancestral customs less in other circumstances. Meanwhile, Philo found they were schools of temperance and justice, where people practiced virtue and contributed financially to Jewish projects such as the Jerusalem Temple.

#### 4. Paul in His House-Churches

Paul did not have influence over all the churches devoted to Christ in his lifetime; he had a set of churches he founded and adopted as his own that seem to have known of each other but have been semi-independent. Even in his own house-churches, he may not have spent a significant amount of time, but he might have instead been aided and abetted by a network of coworkers of varying genders and social backgrounds.<sup>14</sup> His main perceived rivals were Jewish: Peter, who kept renegeing on the agreement to allow non-Jews to ignore kosher rules, and the so-called “Judaizers” who wanted to have male converts to the churches of Christ circumcise themselves according to Jewish law. Somehow, Paul does not perceive his house-churches as having non-Jewish competition to the same degree that he has Jewish competition for his listeners, and thus he flaunts his Pharisaic training and his Torah knowledge. It is therefore logical that Paul would draw upon some but not all Jewish traditions in order to organize his house-churches. Several features of his instructions to the house-churches have correspondences with the features of the synagogues, though Paul himself seems to have construed the house-churches he founded as a singular unit.

Paul seems to have retained strong Jewish ties that might have involved the synagogue, as can be seen in his reliance on the married pair of Aquila and Prisca and also of Apollos as co-workers (Acts 18:2–24). It is possible that Aquila, Prisca, and Apollos still went to the synagogue and there recruited Jewish converts, God-fearers, or other pagans interested in Judaism. Nonetheless, Paul directed his letters to cohesive groups that meet for worship, and they are not synonymous with modern definitions of the synagogue, though they share features with Jewish diasporic groups such as the Therapeutae. Moreover, while in Acts 18:1–8, Crispus the synagogue leader converts as part of Paul’s mission to Corinth, Crispus’ high rank is not included in Paul’s list of those he has personally baptized (1 Cor 1:14), and thus we perhaps don’t know how well-enculturated Aquila, Prisca, and Apollos – let alone Crispus – would be to the synagogue(s) at Corinth from Acts. Would the presence of Jewish ministers and attendees alongside formerly pagan ones have been sufficient to constitute a type of synagogue with the label of its subunit (*ecclesia*)? As Judith Applegate sug-

<sup>14</sup> Ian J. Elmer, “I, Tertius: Secretary or Co-Author of Romans,” *Australian Biblical Review* 56 (2008): 45–60.

gests, if 1 Cor 9:5 means that Peter's wife traveled with him, then "she could easily have been known to churches with which Paul was familiar," including those of Paul.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the collection for Jerusalem to be taken by the Corinthian church implies some level of familiarity with Judean synagogues in addition to diasporic ones, given Peter's high level of Jewish observance compared to Paul. It is hard to say the exact extent to which any of Paul's churches would have been conversant in synagogal practices. Certainly, the claim "we are a synagogue, too" does not feature in Pauline argumentation like Paul's pride in his Pharisaic training.

What can be said is that Paul's house-churches have a high level of familiarity with Torah reading and commensal meals, though their meals specifically – and distinctively – commemorate the sacrificial death of Jesus in the form of *both* body and blood among a group of individuals initiated via baptism. Whether or not Paul's communities were personally familiar with punishments imposed by synagogues either in Judea or the diaspora, many features of the synagogue have some rough equivalent in the house-church. Why not discipline?

In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells some members of the church to stop taking others to court. Alan C. Mitchell has connected this passage (6:1–11) with that of Paul's discussion of the prostitutes, noting a common theme of trampling upon the poor.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, L.L. Welborn has argued that Aquila and Prisca illustrate a carryover of secular reliance on household structures and thus the hospitality of the patron, who reinforces his social status as affluent head of household.<sup>17</sup> Were legal matters moved to the house-church controlled by a patron's household, it might encourage arbitration conducted by someone privileged enough to have gained a solid legal education, as Bruce Winter has argued.<sup>18</sup>

The legal isolationism of 1 Corinthians certainly has an analogue in the legal isolation of the synagogue in the diaspora and, perhaps occasionally, even Judea. To be sure, there are examples of hyperlocal courts with less extreme penalties in Greek literature such as *Daphnis and Chloe*. However, Paul brags in 2 Corinthians of his receiving lashes from the synagogue, and he notes the violence of the Roman spectacle in 1 Corinthians. Could Paul not to some extent be including his critique of Roman legal punishments and the synagogue's lesser violence with his promulgation of internal jurisdiction?

<sup>15</sup> Judith Applegate, "The Co-Elect Woman of 1 Peter," *NTS* 38 (1992): 587–604, here 596.

<sup>16</sup> Alan C. Mitchell, "Rich and Poor in the Courts of Corinth: Litigiousness and Status in 1 Corinthians 6.1–11," *NTS* 39 (1993): 562–86.

<sup>17</sup> L.L. Welborn, "How 'Democratic' Was the Pauline Ekklesia? An Assessment with Special Reference to the Christ Groups of Roman Corinth," *NTS* 65 (2019): 289–309.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce W. Winter, "Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth and the Church: The Forensic Background to 1 Corinthians 6.1–8," *NTS* (1991): 559–72.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul admonished his letter recipients to avoid taking other members of the Christ assembly to court outside the church. After giving his instruction, Paul mentions other activities that are not permitted for the Christ assemblies. Paul's list of proscribed activities includes fornication, idolatry, adultery, prostitution, pederasty, thievery, greed, public intoxication, and slander (1 Cor 6:9). Not all of these would have been illegal according to Roman law in Corinth (e.g., prostitution), and the morals (e.g., being not greedy/being generous) seem to fit more securely within a Jewish legal or moral framework. Presumably, Paul's list of illicit activities could draw from the synagogue and resonate with Jewish members while providing a list of standards to those at Corinth who were, in fact, visiting prostitutes.

Although Paul's list of virtues is extensive, the preceding verses compare those who would seek legal redress outside the church with angels. If followers of Jesus or Jews will judge angels, they should be capable of judging simple legal disputes amongst themselves. Elsewhere in the letter, Paul feels as though his relationship with the Corinthians is sufficiently strong that he may chastise them for having unequal distribution of food at the worship meal, though he only tells them to eat excess food at home rather than to share with those in need. (On the other hand, the Corinthians are collecting money for Jerusalem, so maybe they are not so greedy.) Why then might Paul use circumlocution for the sensitive issue of social and economic status?

It should be noted that he does this elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, indicating perhaps a lack of cohesion as much as group identity. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul makes an appeal to natural law for backing up his veiling veils, holding that men should be unveiled and women should be veiled. Though part of his view of creation corresponds with the second creation story in Genesis where woman comes from man, he notes the converse that man comes from woman. Thus, according to Paul, there is still a principle of mutuality and interdependence rooted in natural order as much as the gendered veiling is rooted in natural order. Appeals to natural law are known from the early imperial period in places as diverse as Greek romance novels to Roman legal codes, though many of them perhaps fall in the second century CE.<sup>19</sup> As Boaz Cohen notes, Ulpian claims that "natural law is that which all animals have been taught by nature."<sup>20</sup> There is therefore the possibility for a law that is not created by human culture and also not revealed at Sinai but embedded in creation from that start. Since Paul must justify his position on veils by several appeals – to natural law and church

<sup>19</sup> Jean Alvares, "Reading Longus' Daphnis and Chloe and Achilles Tatius' Leucippe and Clitophon in Counterpoint," *Authors, Authority, and Interpreters in the Ancient Novel: Essays in Honor of Gareth L. Schmeling*, ed. Edmund P. Cueva, Jean Alvares, and Shannon Byrne (Groningen: Barkhuis, 2006), 1–33, here 10.

<sup>20</sup> Boaz Cohen, "The Relationship of Jewish to Roman Law (Continued)," *JQR* 34 (1944): 409–24, here 442.

custom – it seems that the community does not share his understanding of veils, which could indicate a departure from house-church veiling practices in Corinth. Although putting the veils back at the creation would not reinforce any possible synagogue influence, it would reinforce the idea of community-wide practices that help to delineate the boundaries of a religious movement. Paul, rather than seeking to becoming an antinomian after his running afoul of multiple legal systems, nonetheless seeks to maintain church codes and group identity. In giving the veil even to women who have been enslaved, Paul confronts social norms that restricted honorific veiling to social classes.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, he concludes this instruction with an appeal to the practice of all the churches of God. This seems analogous to the distinctiveness of the synagogues from other associations, because, while synagogues might count as a type of association, not all associations could be synagogues.

### 5. Paul's Group Regulation

Much has been made of Paul's receipt of 39 lashes from the synagogue, but this punishment does not preclude Paul from claiming full birth, training, and current standing. Paul is free to continue going back to the synagogue for further reprimands, garnering more than one punishment without being expelled.<sup>22</sup> Still, the synagogue possibly involved some type of recitation of what would become the Eighteen Benedictions, which featured a curse that may have originally been intended for Sadducees or other elites and then was redirected toward Christians and other traditions diverging from previous synagogue practice.<sup>23</sup> Although the form of this curse during the time of Jesus and Paul may not have included expulsion, it does have the effect of asking participants to consider their ritual performance and make commensurate behavioral modifications in a benign yet serious way.<sup>24</sup> Paul, too, does not become open-ended in his advice for his Christ communities, but he instead encourages excommunication of those baptized who fail to adhere to certain moral standards of behavior, which goes beyond the disapproval his communities already may have had in a more limited capacity. This ritual separation has analogies to Judean group construc-

<sup>21</sup> Janelle Peters, "Slavery and the Gendered Construction of Worship Veils in 1 Corinthians," *Biblica* 101 (2020): 431–43.

<sup>22</sup> John Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 394.

<sup>23</sup> Uri Ehrlich, "On the Early Texts of the Blessings 'Who Builds Jerusalem' and the 'Blessing of David' in the Liturgy," *Pe'amim* 78 (1999): 16–41 (Hebrew); David Instone-Brewer, "The Eighteen Benedictions and the Minim before 70 CE," *JTS* 54 (2003): 25–44; Joel Marcus, "Birket Ha-Minim Revisited," *NTS* 55 (2009): 523–51.

<sup>24</sup> John Bernier, *Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 45.

tion, including that found at the synagogue, the most likely source of inspiration in regulating the Pauline communities.

Adela Collins has pointed out that the use of expulsion in the Pauline letters (1 Cor 5; see 2 Cor 2:11; 4:3–4; 11:12–15; Phil 2:15–16) participates in the “limited ethical dualism” of a group of “analogous phenomena” of roughly contemporaneous Jewish texts, including the *Rule of the Community* and the *Damascus Document*. She concludes: “The more or less explicit reason for expelling the incestuous man in 1 Cor 5 was to guard the holiness of the community and to avoid offense to the presence of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Karin Zetterholm notes that *Jubilees* (22:16–17) very clearly authorizes a ritual separation from the gentiles that is closer to Qumran texts than to later and more lenient rabbinic texts.<sup>26</sup> The Jesus found in the gospels and possibly also the historical Jesus challenged these purity boundaries.<sup>27</sup> Paul, in retreating from Jesus’ more expansive position, could be keeping the moral boundaries of synagogues, broadly construed to encompass groups from those at Qumran to those authoring *Jubilees*.

In their positions, Collins and Zetterholm go past the comparisons of the Paul’s communities to Greek democracy. Drawing heavily upon classical Greek democracy, L. L. Welborn has argued that the assembly of God “was the assembly of Christ-believers in each city, both when it met in the houses of individual patrons and when it assembled as a whole to eat the communal meal.” According to him, in “any given meeting of this assembly, participants might pray and prophesy (1 Cor 11:2–16), might utter a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge, might share their faith, or might speak in tongues (1 Cor 12:4–11); those who assembled might decide as jurors to discipline a deviant member (1 Cor 5:1–5), or the majority might vote to punish a wrongdoer (2 Cor 2:5–11).” Welborn’s reconstruction relies on Greek civic participation in the *polis* and does not consider the democratic assemblies women could have in festival time, since he cites Aristophanes’s satirization of the Thesmophoria rather than the woman-led ritual itself. Welborn neglects evidence of women’s participation in the synagogue and Greek assemblies, which could serve as meaningful forms for government.<sup>28</sup> He also does not discuss Paul’s engagement with Moses (2 Cor

<sup>25</sup> Adela Collins, “The Function of ‘Excommunication’ in Paul,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 251–63, here 263.

<sup>26</sup> Karin Hedner Zetterholm, *The Question of Assumptions: Torah Observance in the First Century, Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 102.

<sup>27</sup> Eyal Regev, “Temple Concerns and High-Priestly Prosecutions from Peter to James: Between Narrative and History,” *NTS* 56 (2009): 64–89.

<sup>28</sup> Bernadette J. Brooten, “Female Leadership in the Ancient Synagogue,” in *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Zeev Weiss (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000), 215–23.

3:13–15).<sup>29</sup> This is perhaps significant as Philo finds a prototypical governor and whom Paul thinks starts the veil that precludes synagogues from seeing the truth of the proximate religious figure of Jesus. In leaving out the synagogue, the purity boundaries of it and other Judean forms of governance that show up quite clearly in Paul's communities in the forms of prohibition of incest and admonitions that members might be dying for failure to properly maintain group harmony also miss a place in the analysis.

As Alan Mitchell has observed, the Corinthians' failure to address serious infractions such as incest in 1 Cor 5 and prostitution in 1 Cor 6 "contrasts sharply with the practice of suing one another in the provincial courts over less serious matters."<sup>30</sup> This suggests that the Corinthians are not most the moral exemplars of classical Athenian democracy, but that they are actually very willing to use the political means at their disposal when Paul would urge them to caution. Paul must chide the Corinthians repeatedly on their pretensions of status, whether from being the better baptizer to being the most invited dinner guest to pagan banquets. Mitchell notes that this corresponds with anthropological tendencies and Roman ethnographic data for "downward law" to be practiced: social superiors take their social inferiors to court, because they feel the court is on their side and do not feel a sense of social equality with their opponent.<sup>31</sup>

The Corinthians are not taking their opponents to court at the synagogue; they are taking their opponents to court in secular law courts just like they might conceive of themselves as seeking status at other Roman venues like the arena and dinner parties. In the diaspora, the synagogue can present a venue that allows for alternate civic discourse, leading to prominent converts to Judaism in some cases. In retracting power back to the Christ assembly from secular spaces, Paul is reinscribing ideas from Judean groups in the diaspora: that it is more socially fair and morally righteous to avoid state legal proceedings and resort to private arbitration in an attempt to maintain holiness boundaries. As Paul is assuming that the Corinthians will simply know what "judge for yourselves" means without extensive elaboration, it is more likely that he is drawing upon Jewish synagogal or even Greek festival (e.g., Thesmophoria) ideas about ad hoc private juridical bodies outside of state oversight.

<sup>29</sup> Ray Barraclough, *Philo's Politics: Roman Rule and Hellenistic Judaism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984).

<sup>30</sup> Alan Mitchell, "Rich and Poor in the Courts of Corinth: Litigiousness and Status in 1 Corinthians 6.1–11," *NTS* 39 (1993): 562–86, here 564.

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, "Rich and Poor," 576.



## 6. Conclusion

Although many types of possibilities for Jewish or Judean assemblies existed in Judea and the diaspora, most of these groups had boundary maintenance predicated on purity with greater intensity than their Greek counterparts. Therefore, in his promotion of internal juridical procedures for the sake of holiness, Paul is closer to a Jewish milieu than a Roman or Greek one. Most Jewish groups could be said to have a type of synagogue or assembly, and Paul seems to have his Christ assemblies mirror these in their group construction. It is also possible that the Jewish participants of Pauline communities could have brought over some norms for collective judgment making from their synagogues, explaining why Paul doesn't need to go through legal arbitration protocols and seems to simply trust that the switch to group judgment will improve the problems in places such as the Corinthian Christ assembly. Instead, he claims that Moses began the Torah veil that remains over those hearing the Torah in the synagogues and prevents them from hearing the truth of Jesus's message as they presumably otherwise would, given the closeness of the two assembly practices.

# The Torah in Ethnically Mixed Assemblies

## Paul's Behavioral Adaptability in 1 Cor 9:19–23 in Context of Jewish Pragmatism in the Diaspora\*

Ruben A. Bühner

### 1. Introduction

In recent debates about the Jewishness of Paul the simple fact that Paul considered himself a Jew for his whole life, is taken for granted.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in the discussions about what is called *Paul within Judaism*, researchers have once again asked how Paul as both a Jew and Christ follower continued to uphold typically Jewish customs, such as dietary restrictions? Furthermore, how did Paul expect other Christ following Jews to respond to Jewish halakha? Crucial here is primarily how Paul and other Jews behaved with reference to Jewish halakha when they were together with non-Jewish believers in Christ in ethnically mixed assemblies. Thus, how would Paul want Jewish Christ-believers to interact with non-Jewish Christ-believers?

Additionally, for our understanding of the Jewishness of Paul the precise conception of the first-century Jewish background against which we read the Pauline letters is decisive. We must ask both, how did Paul expect Jewish followers of Christ to interact with non-Jews, and to what extent is this expectation a Pauline or even “Christian” innovation? My point is this: not only have the

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive study on the Jewish identity of Paul, cf. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Heidenapostel aus Israel*, WUNT 62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); Jörg Frey, “Paul’s Jewish Identity,” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World: Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt*, ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripentrog, AGJU 71 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), 285–321. For the influence of Second Temple thoughts and biblical interpretation on Paul’s letters, cf. Markus Tiwald, *Hebräer von Hebräern*, HBS 52 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2008). In this context, the enduring Jewish identity and imprint also of the Christ-believing Paul is impressively shown by the fact that Pauline Christology – even in its “high” christological aspects – is still to be understood as part of the early Jewish messianic discourse; on this cf. Ruben A. Bühner, *Messianic High Christology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021), 23–63. And for the broader background of superhuman messianic expectations before the Jesus movement see Ruben A. Bühner, *Hohe Messianologie*, WUNT 2/523 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

Pauline letters been subject to subtle anti-Jewish readings in the past. But the same is true to some extent of other contemporary Jewish literature as well. For the present discussions about Paul's Jewishness, it is not helpful, in my opinion, to subject only Paul himself to a new reading. Rather, we also must reexamine decisive contemporary sources with the same sensitivity to long-established anti-Jewish interpretations. And only if we take both together are we able to offer a plausible, new reading of Paul. By referring to sources from diaspora Judaism, I would like to take up some insights from the Paul within Judaism perspective and offer a way of understanding that brings these insights at least partially in dialogue with more traditional exegesis of the Pauline letters.

## 2. Searching for the Background: Forms of Table Fellowship between Jews and non-Jews in the Diaspora

Since, in the Pauline letters, the problems around Jews and gentiles living together mostly arise around issues of food and table fellowship, I will focus on this aspect when discussing the diaspora Jewish background.

In his widely acclaimed and highly instructive monograph "Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora", John M. G. Barclay concludes on the question of table fellowship between Jews and non-Jews: "[I]n general, Jewish dietary laws were kept in the Diaspora [...] and [...] such customs did create a habitual distinction between Jews and non-Jews."<sup>2</sup> Such a relatively uniform picture regarding the practice of table fellowship between Jews and non-Jews in Second Temple Judaism is then also found in the majority of publications until recently. This applies not only to comprehensive presentations of diaspora Judaism, such as Barclay's, but also to studies that focus specifically on issues of food and table fellowship.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, the topic is treated most extensively in the Habilitationsschrift by Christina Eschner, "Essen im antiken Judentum und Urchris-

<sup>2</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 437.

<sup>3</sup> Another comprehensive study with a similar reading regarding table fellowship is that of Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), see especially his conclusion on p. 445. For studies that focus specifically on matters of food and table fellowship, but which all present a similar and rather uniform reading of the sources, cf. Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 163; Christoph Heil, *Die Ablehnung der Speisegebote durch Paulus*, BBB 96 (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1994), 23–123. A different reading that allows for more complexity is offered by David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food* (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011), 35–40; and Luzia Sutter Rehmann, "Abgelehnte Tischgemeinschaft in Tobit, Daniel, Ester, Judit: Ein Plädoyer für Differenzierung," *Lectio difficilior* 1 (2008).

tentum.”<sup>4</sup> In all the early Jewish sources she examines, Eschner identifies a uniform tendency to avoid table fellowship between Jews and non-Jews. Yet, this dominant reading in the history of research is, in my opinion, at least partially influenced by a long-established anti-Jewish interpretation which neglects the complexity of early Jewish discourses in order to read the New Testament as a document of freedom in contrast to a supposedly narrow-minded Jewish background. Yet, if we take a fresh look at the early Jewish sources outside the New Testament, such a contrasting juxtaposition falls apart.

## 2.1 Daniel

To begin with, this is true for the narrative in the first chapter of the book of Daniel, which describes how Daniel and other Jewish captives at the royal court in Babylon are in danger of defiling themselves by eating the food offered at the royal court (cf. נאֵל in Dan 1:8).<sup>5</sup> Yet, Daniel circumvents this defilement by asking for vegetables instead of the food originally offered. Within contemporary commentaries, this defilement is mostly seen as ritual defilement, which is explained by the fact that the food originally offered to Daniel contained meat that, like the king’s wine (cf. Esth C 28), had previously been sacrificed to pagan gods.<sup>6</sup> However, in the text, the food originally offered to Daniel is neither explicitly characterized as “meat sacrificed to idols,” nor is it explicitly stated that it contains meat at all. Conversely, the Old Testament as well as the Babylonian, Greek, and Roman religions also know vegetarian sacrifices. Thus, the common hypothesis in the commentary literature on Dan 1, which assumes that only wine or meat could have been used in cultic contexts,<sup>7</sup> cannot be justified.<sup>8</sup>

Other interpretations argue that נאֵל in Dan 1:8 bears not the meaning of a ritual, but rather a moral defilement. According to this interpretation, Daniel refuses the food as a sign of preserving his Jewish identity and as a refusal of

<sup>4</sup> Christina Eschner, *Essen im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum*, AGJU (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> On the following, see also Ruben A. Bühner, “Interaktion mit dem Fremden. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten der Tischgemeinschaft anhand von Daniel und Ester,” ZAW 133:3 (2021): 329–45, here 331–8; cf. also idem, “Zwischen Abgrenzung und Annäherung. Essens- und Tischgemeinschaft von Juden und Nichtjuden anhand der Diasporanovellen Judith sowie Josef und Asenet,” ZNW 113:2 (2022): 284–302.

<sup>6</sup> For such an argument, see e.g., Eschner, *Essen*, 65, according to whom this conclusion would be obvious. See similarly Klaus Koch, *Daniel. 1. Teilbd. Dan 1–4*, BKAT 22,1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2005), 52–3, 61–2. For a comprehensive overview on the history of research on this issue, see Michael Seufert, “Refusing the King’s Portion: A Reexamination of Daniel’s Dietary Reaction in Daniel 1,” JSOT 43:4 (2019): 644–60.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Eschner, *Essen*, 70: “Im Einzelnen will Daniel offenbar vollständig auf solche Speisen verzichten, die möglicherweise mit Götzendienst in Verbindung stehen. Er verweigert nämlich geradezu jegliche tierische Nahrung.”

<sup>8</sup> This is seen rightly by John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 18.

dependency on the king.<sup>9</sup> But what is overlooked here is that Daniel receives the diet he favors from the royal chief eunuch as well. He even explicitly requests it from him. The dependence on the Babylonian conquerors is, therefore, a given in both cases and it does not seem to be characterized per se by the narrative as problematic.<sup>10</sup>

Rather, in the context of the narrative, the lack of a detailed definition of the initially offered food with regard to its composition, preparation, and previous use represents a conspicuous and, in my opinion, deliberate gap, which is intended to refer precisely to this indeterminable and alien character of the royal food.<sup>11</sup> The Hebrew word פתבג used for the food occurs only in the Book of Daniel (cf. Dan 1:5, 8, 13, 15, 16; 11:26) and the meaning of this Persian loanword is associated with some uncertainty.<sup>12</sup> The repeated pairing together with wine, as well as the use in connection with the verb אכל ("to eat," cf. Dan 1:13), make it unmistakable that some form of food is involved. Yet, more striking for the characterization of the meal is that the choice of the Persian loanword indicates to every reader of the Hebrew text the foreign or exotic character of the meal from a Jewish point of view.

Thus, the story in Dan 1 urges its Jewish readers not to eat foreign and unfamiliar food when eating together with gentiles and especially at the table of gentiles, but instead to prefer food that is clearly definable in terms of origin and composition. With regard to the history of interpretation of the text of Daniel, it must be emphasized that certain possibilities of interaction between Jews and gentiles seem unproblematic according to Dan 1. This applies to table fellowship between Jews and non-Jews in general. Nowhere is it said that Daniel eats the vegetables he desires in isolation or alone with Jews. Rather, the protagonist Daniel lives in close contact with the gentile elite and makes an unprecedented career within the Babylonian and Persian royal court. Nor does the acceptance of food from the hand of a gentile pose a fundamental problem for the Book of

<sup>9</sup> This is argued, e.g., by Sutter Rehmann, "Abgelehnte Tischgemeinschaft." Cf. similarly Goldingay, *Daniel*, 18–9, and Dieter Bauer, *Das Buch Daniel*, NSK.AT 22 (Stuttgart: Kath. Bibelwerk, 1996), 72–5.

<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the advocates of a moral defilement face the difficulty that, within the Old Testament, נאץ II, even when used in connection with matters related to food, generally refers to aspects of ritual defilement.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. similarly Goldingay, *Daniel*, 25: "It is difficult to be sure precisely what was thought to be defiling about the Babylonians' food, and this may be because it was nothing more sharply conceptualized than that it was Babylonian."

<sup>12</sup> It represents a Persian loanword (*patibaga*), which originally meant "allotment" but is also used in Syriac (ܦܬܒܓ) in the sense of "morsel." For the Hebrew פתבג, therefore, either the meaning "part (of the royal meal)" (see Seufert, "Refusing," 648) or else "precious food" (see Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* [Leiden: Brill, 1958], 786) is variously suggested. Whether specifically precious food or generally a portion of the royal food is meant can no longer be determined with certainty. In the context of the Book of Daniel, food from the table of the Babylonian king implies precious food.

Daniel. Instead, just as king Jehoiachin sat with the Babylonian king every day since his exile (2 Kgs 25:29–30), such a meal fellowship also represents a perfectly legitimate form of interaction with gentiles for the narrative in Dan 1. The acceptance of an invitation to a meal in a non-Jewish house with food from a non-Jewish kitchen, thus, represents a legitimate possibility of coexistence in Dan 1, as long as food that is known and clearly definable in terms of its nature is served.

## 2.2 *Esther*

A rather different view on issues of food and table fellowship between Jews and gentiles is attested to by the different ancient versions of the book of Esther.<sup>13</sup> Here it can be noted for the MT that – with the exception of the refusal to worship people and gods other than the God of Israel – no restrictions on interactions with gentiles can be discerned. No references to typical features of Jewish life, such as issues of circumcision, purity of food or Sabbath observance, can be found in the Book of Esther. Conversely, the narrative implies that Esther lives a life largely conformed to the surrounding majority culture in many of these matters.<sup>14</sup> For example, Esther is provided with all the necessities of life for twelve months in preparation for the royal bridal show in the Persian palace (Esth 2:9–12). In 2:9 it is explicitly mentioned that Esther was also provided with מְנוּחָה (literally: “her share” / “what was due to her”) by the royal palace, which most modern translations render with “food” or similar. Since the text at the same time emphasizes in the immediately following verse that she keeps her Jewish identity *secret* (Esth 2:10), it is probably meant to convey to the reader that Esther – at least during this time – does not preserve Jewish dietary laws or similar characteristics of Jewish life.<sup>15</sup>

However, the reader of the Septuagint version of Esther is confronted with a clearly different picture. Through its recharacterization of the figure of Esther in particular, the Septuagint fundamentally rejects participation in meals at the

<sup>13</sup> On the following, cf. also Bühner, “Interaktion,” 338–42.

<sup>14</sup> But see differently, Frederic W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther*, WBC 9 (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 368–9.

<sup>15</sup> See also the comment by Carey A. Moore, *Esther. Introduction, Translation and Notes*, AB 7B (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 28: “In order for Esther to have concealed her ethnic and religious identity [...] in the harem, she must have eaten [...], dressed, and lived like a Persian rather than an observant Jewess.” But cf. differently, Eschner, *Essen*, 123 n. 293, and similar, Susanne Plietzsch, “Eating and Living: The Banquets in the Esther Narratives,” in *Decisive Meals: Table Politics in Biblical Literature*, ed. Nathan MacDonald, Luzia Sutter Rehmann, and Kathy Ehrensperger, LNTS 449 (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 27–41, here 38–9. In my opinion, however, they underestimate the immediate context of the narrative, which makes it explicit twice that Esther keeps her Jewish identity *secret* during her time at the royal court. If, however, Esther does not reveal her ethnic origin at the Persian court, then this also implies that she did not practice typical features of a Jewish way of life.

table of gentiles. Thus, in Esth 2:20 LXX the Septuagint immediately after the note about Esther's marriage to the king adds the remark, "And Esther did not change her manner of life" (καὶ Εσθηρ οὐ μετήλλαξεν τὴν ἀγωγὴν αὐτῆς). And in Esth C 28 Esther prays to God, "Your handmaid has not eaten at Haman's table, I have not graced a royal banquet (by my presence), and I have not drunk sacrificial wine." As a reason for the rejection of table fellowship the Septuagint version notes the previous use of wine in cultic contexts. Other sources of ritual impurity of the food served at gentile tables may also be in the background, but are not explicitly named.

### 2.3 *Judith and Joseph and Aseneth*

Another and again quite different picture is found in the Book of Judith. Here Judith does not refuse to eat with the Assyrian general Holofernes and his household (cf. Jdt 12:1, 14–16).<sup>16</sup> Rather, table fellowship with a non-Jew presupposes that the food and drink consumed by a Jew in the non-Jewish house come from a Jewish kitchen (cf. Jdt 12:2, 19).<sup>17</sup> Judith's practice of bringing her own food, drink, and dishes is one way of fulfilling these conditions.

Additionally, the narrative of Joseph and Aseneth adds further aspects to the diverse picture.<sup>18</sup> Here, the possibility of table fellowship between Jews and gentiles appears to be contradictory in nature.<sup>19</sup> While such table fellowship is assumed in the narrative without further comments in Jos. Asen. 20:6–8 as well as in 21:8, Joseph refuses to eat at the same table with the gentile Pentephres in Jos. Asen. 7:1. The wider context of the book makes it difficult to provide a plausible answer to this contradiction.<sup>20</sup> One possible option could be that Jo-

<sup>16</sup> See similarly, Jordan Rosenblum, *Food and Identity in Early Rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 38–9. But differently, Eschner, *Essen*, 127–30, according to whom the narrative would advocate strongly against any form of table fellowship between Jews and non-Jews. For such an interpretation, see further Thomas Hieke, "Torah in Judith. Dietary Laws, Purity and Other Torah Issues in the Book of Judith," in *A Pious Seductress: Studies in the Book of Judith*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 14 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 98.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 276.

<sup>18</sup> For the Jewish origin of Joseph and Aseneth, see John J. Collins, "Joseph and Aseneth: Jewish or Christian?" *JSPE* 14:2 (2005): 112–27; cf. also Edith M. Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth*, GAP (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 28–37. But see differently Ross S. Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 245–93, who argues that the book was written by Christians in the third or fourth century CE.

<sup>19</sup> For a more extensive discussion see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Ethik und Tora. Zum Toraverständnis in Joseph und Aseneth," in *Joseph und Aseneth*, ed. Eckart Reinmuth, *SAPERE* 15 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 187–217.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. also Niebuhr, "Ethik und Tora," 198.

seph only refuses to sit at the same *table*, but not to eat the same *food* as his gentile hosts.

## 2.4 Outcome

One could easily expand this list with a look at the issue of table fellowship in the book of Tobit or in the Letter of Aristeas. All these different pieces of Jewish literature from Second-Temple Judaism present complex and diverse forms of interactions between Jews and non-Jews, especially when it comes to the question of table fellowship. And even beyond the Jewish literature this picture is further confirmed by the extant inscriptions and papyri. There we have plenty of evidence that Jews, especially in the diaspora, participated, for example, as ephebes in Greek gymnasiums,<sup>21</sup> or as athletes and spectators in the different forms of gymnastic, hippic, or musical competitions.<sup>22</sup> But all these forms of interactions between Jews and non-Jews do, at least to some extent, also imply some forms of table fellowship.<sup>23</sup>

And the same applies even more, for example, to the tens of thousands of Jewish slaves in the Roman Empire who had to live and work in the household of a gentile.<sup>24</sup> During enslavement, the preservation of one's Jewish existence had to face great challenges. In this context, certain forms of Jewish piety, such as Sabbath observance or pilgrimages, seem to have been largely excluded. And the reasoning of Josephus in *A.J.* 16.1–4 that the sale of Jews as slaves had to be rejected because they would be forced to obey the orders of their owners who did not share the Jewish way of life makes it clear that also for the question of eating and table fellowship a continuity of the Jewish way of life must have been possible only to a limited extent for those who were enslaved in a non-Jewish house or to a non-Jewish owner. This applies all the more to those cases in which Jews were enslaved as children in a non-Jewish environment, as well as to the descendants of Jewish slaves who already had to cope with their lives in a state of slavery from birth.

Similar forms of table fellowship are implied by the evidence we have of Jews serving as soldiers, working as political representatives, or for Jews who live in

<sup>21</sup> See the discussion and evidence collected by Feldman, *Jew*, 57–9; Gerhard Delling, “Die Bewältigung der Diasporasituation durch das hellenistische Judentum,” in *Studien Zum Frühjudentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1971–1987*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 83–5; Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 123–4; Barclay, *Jews*, 234–5; Stefan Krauter, *Bürgerrecht und Kulturteilnahme*, BZNW 127 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 268.

<sup>22</sup> On this, see the comprehensive monographs by Harrold A. Harris, *Greek Athletics and the Jews* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), and recently Loren R. Spielman, *Jews and Entertainment in the Ancient World*, TSAJ (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> On this, see, e.g., Wolfgang Decker, “Sportfeste,” DNP 11:847–55.

<sup>24</sup> See the collected evidence by Delling, “Bewältigung,” 79–81, and the chapter on “Isolated Jews” by Barclay, *Jews*, 325–6.



isolated conditions, where, for example, the purchase of kosher food was only possible to a limited extent.

This is not the place to offer a comprehensive study of all this material. My point is that it is implausible to draw a more or less uniform picture of how Jews in the diaspora interacted with their non-Jewish neighbors with respect to table fellowship and Jewish dietary laws. Instead, what the sources reveal and what is most likely, is that in Paul's time and in the Jewish communities of the cities where Paul proclaimed the gospel, there was already a long-established and diverse experience of finding pragmatic and viable options for interacting with non-Jews. Long before the apostle Paul and even long before the early Jesus movement, Jews had to deal with these issues. And the sources at our disposal reveal that they found very different and flexible solutions.

Needless to say, none of these forms of interaction or table fellowship imply an abandonment of Judaism or a critique of the Jewish way of life.

### 3. How Did Paul Expect Jewish Christ-Believers to Follow the Torah When Interacting with non-Jewish Christ-Believers?

For the question of this paper, how Paul expected Jewish Christ-believers to follow the Torah when interacting with non-Jewish Christ-believers, the task of identifying the implied addresses of the Pauline letters is most important. Is it legitimate for Paul's statements to include their relevance to *Jewish* believers in Christ? Or are his letters exclusively addressed to non-Jewish followers of Christ and are Jewish brothers and sisters therefore generally excluded from his instructions?<sup>25</sup> Caroline J. Hodge has rightly stated: "There is perhaps no more pivotal issue for determining one's reading of Paul than audience."<sup>26</sup> There are not many other heavily debated issues within Pauline scholarship where the outcome of the discussion is so prejudiced from the – conscious or unconscious – presuppositions. But at the same time it is a mine-filled terrain. Thus, for the present purpose I would like to put these questions aside. Instead of discussing whether Paul included Jews among the addressees of his letters, I want to focus on the apostle Paul himself and, thus, on a follower of Christ whose Jewishness is beyond doubt. The question which I want to discuss in the following is, therefore, not how Jews in general, but how the Christ-believing Paul followed the Torah when interacting with non-Jewish Christ-believers?

<sup>25</sup> For such a conclusion, see, e.g., Paula Fredriksen, *Paul. The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 113: "The fact that all of his [Paul's] extant letters are addressed solely to gentile assemblies gives us no opportunity to hear him discourse on Jewish practice by Jews."

<sup>26</sup> Caroline E. J. Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs. A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 9.

To deal with this question, I want to take a new look at Paul's biographical notes in 1 Cor 9:19–23 and put them into context with the above-mentioned variety of Jewish behavior in community with non-Jews, especially in the diaspora.<sup>27</sup> Particularly two issues are of major importance for our understanding of the short passage in 1 Cor 9. First, who are the people or groups of whom Paul says he has become like them, the “Jews,” “those under the law,” “those without law,” and “the weak”? And second, what does Paul mean when he says he *became* (ἐγενόμην in v. 20 and 22a; γέγονα in v. 22b) like those people or groups? Whereas the answer to both questions seemed settled and fairly safe for a long time within Pauline scholarship, they are being discussed anew within the scholarly debates about Paul within Judaism.

Of the four different terms Paul uses in 1 Cor 9:20–22 the group called Jews (τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, v. 20) is the only one whose reference seems clear, at least with respect to ethnicity. But beyond ethnicity, there are good reasons to assume Paul uses the term here to refer specifically to Jews who do not – or, in Paul's perspective, not yet – follow Christ.<sup>28</sup> More difficult is the question regarding the identity and ethnicity of the other three groups.

The traditional answer interprets them along the Jewish / non-Jewish line. Thus, “those under the law” (τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον) are understood as Jews, who do not follow Christ, just as the preceding term τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις.<sup>29</sup> Following this traditional line of interpretation the third term τοῖς ἀνόμοις refers to non-Jews, or pagans, who are not, and have never been, “under the law” and are, thus “without law.” The fourth and last term is then either interpreted as a reference to the same group of people who are called τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν in 1 Cor 8, or the term

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, many scholars within the Paul within Judaism perspective have not written much about the passage in 1 Corinthians – although it obviously provides important insights into the extent to which Paul continued his Jewish behavior when he became a follower of Christ. For example, to the best of my knowledge, Magnus Zetterholm has written nearly nothing about 1 Cor 9. The same is true for Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian. The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2009). And in Paula Fredriksen's monograph on Paul, this passage is dealt with only in two sentences including a footnote (cf. Fredriksen, *Paul*, 165 and 228–9 n. 38). But see differently Mark D. Nanos, “Paul's Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy ‘To Become Everything to Everyone’ (1 Corinthians 9:19–23),” in *Reading Corinthians and Philippians Within Judaism. Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 4* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 52–92 and already Nanos, “The Myth of the ‘Law-Free’ Paul Standing Between Christians and Jews,” *SCJR* 4:1 (2009): 16–8; Nanos, “Paul and Judaism. Why Not Paul's Judaism?” in idem, *Reading Paul Within Judaism. Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos 1* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2017), 1–21, here 6–9.

<sup>28</sup> If Paul referred to Jews regardless of their relationship to Christ, it would seem at least odd that he still wants to “win” (κερδαίνω) them. For the meaning of κερδαίνω in 1 Cor 9 in the sense of “to add to the community” or “to save,” cf. the parallel use of σώζω in v. 22; cf. further Matt 15:15; 1 Peter 3:1.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 702 “The phrase τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον simply explicates the reference to the Jews.”

“weak” is understood as a reference to people who are disadvantaged in a social and economic sense.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Paul’s change of behavior includes different forms of Jewish customs depending on the ethnicity of the people he is living with.

Such an interpretation is, then, often used to at least relativize Paul’s Jewishness or his Jewish way of life. For example, N.T. Wright concludes from his interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23: “Being a ‘Jew’ was no longer Paul’s basic identity.”<sup>31</sup> And Hagner declares from such an interpretation of 1 Cor 9 that this would clearly imply Paul’s “break with Judaism.”<sup>32</sup> Similar conclusions can be found in numerous publications.<sup>33</sup> And even beyond such explicit interpretations that read the passage as evidence for Paul rejecting or breaking with Judaism, readings that understand Paul’s described behavior in 1 Cor 9:19–23 as a specific “Christian” freedom which stands against Paul’s former Jewish way of life are very widespread. Thus, the passage is commonly read against the background of the linguistically related argumentations in Rom 6:15–23 and Gal 5:1–15. There Paul is talking about the absolute and mutually exclusive contrast between bondage under sin and law and freedom in Christ. From taking this as the background for 1 Cor 9, it follows a maximalist understanding of the idea of freedom introduced in 1 Cor 9:19a. The ἐλευθερος ὢν ἐκ πάντων then forms, for instance, the “opposition to all kinds of enslaving human conditions,”<sup>34</sup> including “the traditions given with Jewish origin.”<sup>35</sup> The anthropological passages from Rom 6:15–23 as well as Gal 5:1–15 are also in the background of the interpretation of 1 Cor 9 where they are not explicitly cited, but where it is said that

<sup>30</sup> For such an interpretation, see Gerd Theißen, “The Strong and the Weak in Corinth: A Sociological Analysis of a Theological Quarrel,” in *Understanding Paul’s Ethics*, ed. John H. Schütz (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 107–28. Cf. also the conclusion by Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 705: “In this context the weak may mean those whose options for life and conduct were severely restricted because of their dependence on *the wishes of patrons, employers, or slave owners*.”

<sup>31</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (New York: SPCK, 2013), 1436. In the following Wright defends the conception of Christians as a “third race” (*ibid.*, 1448).

<sup>32</sup> Donald A. Hagner, “Paul as a Jewish Believer – According to His Letters,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Oskar Skarsaune (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 113.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., most recently, Udo Schnelle, “Über Judentum und Hellenismus hinaus: Die paulinische Theologie als neues Wissenssystem,” *ZNW* 111:1 (2020): 124–55, here 139–40 with n. 48, who argues from 1 Cor 9:19–23 that Paul can no longer be a real Jew (Jude “im Vollsinn”), since the adaptability which Paul describes would be impossible for a Jewish identity (“weit über das hinaus, was für eine jüdische Identität zumutbar wäre”).

<sup>34</sup> Dieter Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, KEK 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 316: “Gegensatz zu allen möglichen versklavenden menschlichen Verhältnissen.” Cf. also Gabriele Boccaccini, *Paul’s Three Paths to Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 151: “Being no longer ‘under the law’ (1 Cor 9:20) meant for him that he was no longer under the power of sin and was justified in Christ, not that he was free from the obligations of the Mosaic covenant.”

<sup>35</sup> Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 316: “[D]ie mit der jüdischen Herkunft gegebenen Traditionen.”

only freedom would enable the renunciation of the ἐξουσία.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the freedom Paul speaks of in 1 Cor 9:19 is understood not as simple contrast to enslavement (cf. 1 Cor 9:19b), but as a specifically “Christian” freedom.

Such interpretations, although well established in many commentaries, leave many questions unanswered. For example, why – according to these interpretations – does Paul use the first two terms τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις and τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον when they basically refer to the same group of people?<sup>37</sup> And, more important, how do the anti-Judaic implications which were drawn from such an interpretation fit other Pauline passages, wherein Paul unequivocally confesses his Jewishness? Questions like these have led scholars especially from the Paul within Judaism perspective to challenge the traditional interpretation in recent years.

Within recent attempts to offer a different reading of 1 Cor 9:19–23 Mark Nanos provides the most elaborate and differentiated reading. Yet the structure of argument is quite different than with respect to other debates among Paul within Judaism scholars.<sup>38</sup> Whereas Nanos regularly argues that Paul’s statement on the Torah solely refer to non-Jews, he does take the four terms in 1 Cor 9:20–22 as referring to *different* ethnic groups.<sup>39</sup> Thus, whereas the first term, “Jews,” refers to Jews in general, the second term, “those under the law,” refers either to proselytes or to Jews “representing stricter standards like Pharisees.”<sup>40</sup> For the third term, τοῖς ἀνόμοις, then, Nanos suggests “lawless (perhaps non-practicing) Jews” or, alternatively, “non-Jews”<sup>41</sup> and the fourth term, τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν, refers to “non-Christ-believing polytheists.”<sup>42</sup>

In v. 22b Paul gives his own summary of the preceding verses saying, “I have become all things to all people.” This conclusion, however, would be overblown if he only meant, “I have become all things to all *Jews*.” Even more striking, in 1 Cor 9 Paul uses his own behavior as an example for what he expects his ad-

<sup>36</sup> For such an interpretation cf., for instance, Wolfgang Schrage, *Der 1. Brief an Die Korinther*. Bd. 2: 1Kor 6,12–11,16, EKK 7 (Zürich, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger; Neukirchener, 1995), 337: “Nur die ἐλευθερία ermöglicht auch das Freisein von Praktizierung und Durchsetzung der ἐξουσία.”

<sup>37</sup> This question is already asked by Origen, cf. Schrage, *Korinther*, 2:341 n. 362.

<sup>38</sup> At other places Nanos regularly identifies specific people or groups, especially in Paul’s letter to the Romans, in contrast to the majority of interpretations as Jewish. With respect to Rom 13:1–7, see Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 289–336; and with respect to Paul’s letter to the Galatians, see Nanos, “The Inter- and Intra-Jewish Political Context of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> See Nanos, “Myth,” 17 n. 53.

<sup>40</sup> Nanos, “Myth,” 17.

<sup>41</sup> Nanos, “Myth,” 17.

<sup>42</sup> On this rather new suggestion for interpreting “the weak” in 1 Corinthians, see Mark D. Nanos, “The Polytheist Identity of the ‘Weak,’ and Paul’s Strategy to ‘Gain’ Them: A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1,” in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, *Pauline Studies* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 179–210.

dresses in Corinth to do in chs. 8–10. But how could he use his own behavior toward Jews as an example for his (at least mostly) non-Jewish audience? Consequently, although it is difficult to identify specific groups behind the terms Paul uses in 1 Cor 9:20–22, it nevertheless seems unlikely that all these terms refer only to different groups of Jews. At least the term τοῖς ἀνόμοις is most likely a reference to non-Jews.<sup>43</sup> In other texts this term can also refer broadly to “unjust people” regardless of their ethnicity (cf. Acts 2:23; 3 Macc 6:9; Ezek 18:24 LXX; Luke 22:37).<sup>44</sup> Therefore, in 1 Cor 9 it most likely includes Jews as well as non-Jews who live unrighteous lives, or it is used in contrast to the preceding τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον and meant to refer specifically to non-Jews, to whom the Torah was not revealed.<sup>45</sup> But if we agree that Paul refers to different ethnic groups in 1 Cor 9:19–23 and his different behavior among those groups, then the issue arises how to combine such an interpretation with the idea of a Paul who continued his Jewish way of life? This issue is even stronger if we consider Nanos’ interpretation of the “weak” in 1 Cor 9 as referring to non-Christ-believing polytheists. Since, how could Paul say that he has become or even behaved like polytheists?

Thus, Nanos’ and, to a lesser degree, Fredriksen’s basic challenge to the traditional interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23 addresses what it means when Paul says he “became,” or “has become” (ἐγενόμην in v. 20 and 22a; γέγονα in v. 22b) like those people. If the majority reading is right, and Paul refers to his change of behavior, how then could he say in v. 20 that he himself who is a Jew since birth, “became like a Jew”? Moreover, does Paul really recommend a “chameleon-like” behavior?<sup>46</sup> Such behavior could be regarded as inconsistent and morally dishonest, since Paul would only pretend to live according to the Torah when among Jews, but would neglect Jewish customs when among non-Jews.

To avoid such implications, scholars like Fredriksen and, again, Nanos, have suggested a reading that understands Paul’s adaptation not as an adaptation of his behavior, and even less so a different attitude towards the Torah. Instead, what Paul means when he says that he “has become” like those different groups of people is that he changed his way of reasoning. Thus, Fredriksen explains Paul’s remarks on his own conduct: “Paul the Pharisee, expert in his ancestral traditions, argued with his *syngeneis* on the basis of Jewish scriptures. But with god-fearing non-Jews he preached not only through appeals to biblical texts but also ‘in the demonstration of spirit and of power’ (1 Cor 2.4; cf. 9.21).”<sup>47</sup> And in

<sup>43</sup> Concerning the fourth term, weak, I do not think Paul had a certain (ethnic) group in mind. Instead, Paul chooses this term as the last of his list in order to create a link between his own behavior which he had just mentioned and his instructions in 1 Cor 8, where he talks about the “weak” in Corinth.

<sup>44</sup> On this see Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 703.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. also Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 703.

<sup>46</sup> Nanos, “Paul and Judaism,” 6.

<sup>47</sup> Fredriksen, *Paul*, 165; cf. 228–9 n. 38.

a similar way Nanos concludes, “Such ‘rhetorical adaptability’ consists of varying one’s speech to different audiences: reasoning from their premises, but not imitating their conduct in other ways.”<sup>48</sup>

Especially Nanos has elaborated his interpretation of 1 Cor 9 in several essays. In his essays, he refers to Paul’s proclamation of the gospel in Acts 17 as an example of his rhetorical adaptability. In Acts 17, Paul begins his argument by mentioning the idol with the designation “To the unknown God.” Thus, Paul adapts his way of reasoning to his audience and argues from within their worldview. But regardless of this plausible example from Acts, such an interpretation has its problems when compared with the immediate context of 1 Cor 9, since in 1 Cor 8 Paul demands from his addressees a real change of their *behavior*. They are supposed to stop eating food offered to idols, if it causes a brother to stumble (cf. 1 Cor 8:9, 12–13). In ch. 9, therefore, Paul uses his own behavior as an example of how the Corinthians should put the interests of their brothers and sisters in the community above their own. Thus, Paul starts with examples from his own life, where he also waived his own rights and privileges for the sake of others. He says he abstained from certain kinds of food (1 Cor 9:4), he did not marry (1 Cor 9:4), and he voluntarily works to earn his own living (1 Cor 9:6). In v. 12, he even repeats his point that he did not make use of his rights (οὐκ ἐχρησάμεθα τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ ταύτῃ). Therefore, in the immediate context it is clear Paul is talking about a real *behavioral* adaptability for the sake of others.<sup>49</sup> Now, in 1 Cor 9:19 the question of 1 Cor 9:1, “Am I not free?” is taken up again and answered with “For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, I find it hard to deny Paul is still talking about his behavioral adaptability in vv. 19–23. This is even clearer if one interprets the following ἐγενόμην as an explanation of the initial πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα (see the similar wording in v. 22: τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα).<sup>51</sup> Paul made himself a slave to all through putting their interests above his own behavioral habits. If Paul was only talking about his change of rhetoric, we not only must imply a hard break with the immediate context, but the initial

<sup>48</sup> Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship,” 68–9.

<sup>49</sup> Nanos is well aware of this striking argument against his interpretation, but he offers no explanation for it. See, Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship,” 74: “He [Paul] calls the knowledgeable to change their lifestyle, to be sure, something he does not describe seeking among the recipients of his evangelistic tactics in 9:16–23.”

<sup>50</sup> The intentional reference back to v. 1 becomes all the more clear by the fact that ἐλευθερος is placed emphatically at the beginning of the sentence in v. 19: “Free is what I am”; on this, cf. also Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 700–1. Consequently, the γάρ in v. 19 is either used in a continuing or an explaining sense, but not opposing (on this cf. Schrage, *Korinther*, 2:336).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the structural analysis by Schrage, *Korinther*, 2:334–36, with the persuasive conclusion: “Sachlich ist V 19 der programmatische Grundsatz, dem dann in V 20ff vier Illustrationen und in V 22 das Resümee folgen” (Schrage, *Korinther*, 2:335).

wording ἐμαυτὸν ἐδοῦλωσα would be only an unsatisfying rendering of Paul's rhetorical adjustment.

If Paul does indeed have behavioral adaptability in mind, it is necessary to ask what kind of behavior Paul has in mind. Two points are striking in this debate. First, obviously, Paul's formulation includes a wide range of behaviors and does not only target one specific behavior.<sup>52</sup> When Paul states that he has become "all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:22), it is clear he is no longer talking about the specific issue of the consumption of meat, which was the focus of the previous chapter.<sup>53</sup>

Second, the fact that Paul cites various groups to illustrate his behavioral adaptability, whose distinctive differences lie precisely in their ethnicity and in their relation to the Torah, makes it compelling that Paul's adaptability also includes these two areas. If Paul was not concerned with ethnicity-specific behavior, he could have just as easily pointed out that he behaved differently during his stay in Corinth than he did in Ephesus or Tarsus. Thus, Paul is concerned about an adaptation of behavior depending on whether the surrounding group consists of Jews or non-Jews. And it is about an adaptation of behavior that includes different relations to the Torah depending on the contextual situation. This does not necessarily mean that Paul is *only* talking about different attitudes towards or interpretations of the Torah, though it certainly includes such Torah-related differences.<sup>54</sup> In this broad spectrum, the specifically Corinthian problem about different behaviors related to the consumption of meat, while not explicitly highlighted, is certainly included.

In light of the above-mentioned variety of Jewish interactions with non-Jews in the diaspora, the adaptation of Paul's behavior must neither be called a "chameleon-like" inconsistency nor can it be used to argue that Paul no longer saw his Jewish identity as a central aspect of his life or that he must have broken with Judaism.<sup>55</sup>

If it is true, that Jews – especially in the diaspora – have had already a long tradition of adapting their Jewish behavior and ancestral customs to their indi-

<sup>52</sup> See differently, Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 318, who points specifically to the ritual laws of the Torah ("Um dies klarzustellen, hält er sich gerade bei den Heiden nicht an das Ritualgesetz").

<sup>53</sup> But see differently Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 472: "when he [Paul] was among Jews he was kosher; when he was among Gentiles he was nonkosher;" similar, but with caution, Schrage, *Korinther*, 2:334: "Es ist nicht ganz auszuschließen, daß sich diese Beispiele speziell auf die Speisegesetze beziehen."

<sup>54</sup> Cf. differently, Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 317, who argues that it is all about Torah observance ("tora-konforme Praktiken").

<sup>55</sup> This is also shown by the fact that when Paul is writing about his adaptation to Jews (v. 20), he omits the negation μή ὢν (Ἰουδαῖος) ("although I am not [a Jew]") which follows his designation for the second and third group. This clearly shows that he still and permanently identifies himself as a Jew.



vidual living conditions, then Paul's behavioral adaptability described in 1 Cor 9:19–23 is nothing that can be called “un-Jewish” or incompatible with a genuine Jewish identity. As a matter of fact, what Paul describes in 1 Cor 9 is neither a real Pauline “invention” nor is it only possible on the basis of a specifically “Christian” freedom.<sup>56</sup> It is simply a possible form of a first-century Jewish life in the diaspora with a tradition that goes beyond Paul and the early Jesus movement. Furthermore, it is a way of Jewish life which gained an entirely new motivating force and a new significance through the gospel. What is rather new, is the reason for his behavior and not the behavior itself. At the end, it is “for the sake of the gospel” (1 Cor 9:23) that Paul adapts his behavior to his audience.

#### 4. Concluding Theses

1. Even long before the Jesus movement, interaction with non-Jews did not require a renunciation of Jewish identity.
2. When interacting with non-Jews Paul showed some flexibility in his behavior in relation to typical Jewish practice. In his flexibility Paul remained within the framework of what was accepted as “Jewish” at least by some Jews even before the Jesus movement.
3. Therefore, Paul's pragmatism does not mean an abandonment of Judaism, or a critique against the Jewish way of life.
4. Paul does not criticize “Judaism” in general, but his behavior in 1 Cor 9:19–23 implies a critique of *some* Jewish interpretations of the Torah and *certain* Jewish behaviors towards non-Jews. Paul does not abandon “Judaism,” but his behavior implies a distance from certain currents of Judaism.
5. What is new, however, is the reason for Paul's flexible behavior, not his behavior itself. Paul does not “invent” a new way to live among non-Jews, but he gives a new christological basis for a long-established way of Jewish life.

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<sup>56</sup> For a detailed explanation why 1 Cor 9:19 is not about a special “Christian” form of freedom, see Ruben A. Bühner, “Die paulinische Rede von der Selbstversklavung in 1 Kor 9,19 vor dem Hintergrund jüdischer Identität im Sklavenstand,” NTS 69,2 (2023), 195–209.





# The Lukan Paul as Prophet of God's Resurrected Messiah

## Prophecy and Messianism in the Lukan Depiction of Paul

Joshua W. Jipp

### 1. Introduction

In an earlier essay I probed the accusation made against the “Lukan Paul,” and reported by the “Lukan James,” that there are “thousands of believers among the Jews, all of whom are zealous for the Law” who have heard that Paul “teaches the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses” (Acts 21:20–21).<sup>1</sup> Seven days later, Jews from Asia grasp hold of Paul and claim that Paul is the man “who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place [i.e., the temple]” (21:28). Neither James the character nor Luke’s narrative as a whole, of course, agrees with the assessment that Paul rejects Moses. And thus, begins the lengthy section of defense speeches in Acts 22–28 where Paul consistently answers the charges that he opposes his own people and ancestral customs (e.g., 24:10–13; 25:10–11; 28:17).<sup>2</sup> One of the obvious rhetorical functions of Paul’s speeches is to persuade his listeners that Paul is a faithful Jew and that the charges brought against him are false. More than half of Paul’s words, in fact, are taken up by these apologetic speeches highlighting the fact that, at the time of the writing of Acts, Paul was both well-known, controversial, and (for Luke) in need of a strong apologetic.<sup>3</sup>

Paul’s repetitive arguments conform nicely to definitions of ancient notions of ethnicity, namely, shared ancestral customs, family, *paideia*, land, language, and the gods and their cults.<sup>4</sup> In the Hebrew language (Acts 22:2), Paul claims that he is a “Jewish man” (22:3), educated at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem (22:3b), and is zealous for his people’s ancestral customs (22:3c; also 26:4–5).

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<sup>1</sup> The present essay expands upon some of the claims made in Joshua W. Jipp, “The Paul of Acts: Proclaimer of the Hope of Israel or Teacher of Apostasy from Moses,” *NovT* 62 (2020): 60–78.

<sup>2</sup> On Acts 27:1–28:10 as offering a reminder of Paul’s missionary activity among the gentiles see Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1–10*, *NovTSup* 153 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 219–287.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 86.

<sup>4</sup> See here, for example, Paula F. Fredriksen, “How Jewish is God: Divine Ethnicity in Paul’s Theology,” *JBL* 137 (2018): 193–212.

Paul emphasizes that he is a Pharisee according to Torah observance (23:5–6; 24:14–16). His visit to Jerusalem was not in order to profane the temple but, rather, in order to give alms “for my *ethnos*” (εἰς τὸ ἔθνος μου, 24:17b). From the Lukan Paul’s standpoint, Israel is God’s elected people; Torah-observance for Jews is good; and the Law and the Prophets reveal the will of God. But if the charges brought against Paul are nonsense, then why does Luke so frequently portray Paul as encountering intense opposition amongst the Jewish people in every city and synagogue he frequents? Paul is chased from city to city precisely by those fellow Jews to whom he proclaims his message (e.g., 13:42–52; 14:4–7).

Making sense of the plausibility of the charges of apostasy brought against Paul requires, I suggest, an understanding of the two central “Christological” threads of Acts and their implications for Luke’s depiction of the people of God, namely, the messianic and prophetic aspects of Lukan Christology. Jens Schröter has rightly argued, in my view, that “the conception of the people of God developed by Luke must be viewed in close connection with the Christology of his work.”<sup>5</sup> I will argue first (and more briefly given I’ve written on this elsewhere) that the Lukan Paul’s primary claim is that Jesus of Nazareth is the resurrected and enthroned Messiah who has, through his life, death, and especially his resurrection, inaugurated Israel’s restoration and deliverance. But Jesus is also understood by Luke as Israel’s greatest prophet who warns God’s people to repent in light of God’s visitation of his people. Paul’s ministry is best understood as an extension of Jesus’s prophetic ministry as he, Luke’s star witness, testifies that God has sent the Messiah and raised him from the dead thereby offering salvation to both Israel and the gentiles. The Lukan Paul believes that the divine plan for Israel’s restoration consists in God’s resurrection of the Messiah (as the foretaste of the final resurrection from the dead). Paul does not give up on Israel as God’s elect people, though he – like Jesus – prophetically warns the Jewish people of the consequences of failing to recognize the fulfillment of God’s covenantal purposes brought to fruition in the resurrected Messiah. I unpack how the messianic and prophetic strands of Lukan Christology are necessary for understanding the Lukan Paul in three steps. First, Luke depicts Jesus as the Davidic Messiah who will save Israel and establish an everlasting kingdom over Israel. But Jesus also prophetically warns Israel to embrace this divine visit. Second, while Israel’s leaders reject and crucify the agent of the divine visitation, the Lukan Paul argues that this act conforms to the foreknowledge of God and is, ironically, the means by which God fulfills his promises to restore the Davidic monarchy, namely, by means of resurrecting and enthroning-in-heaven the Davidic Messiah. Thirdly, and finally, the Lukan Paul is God’s prophet who

<sup>5</sup> Jens Schröter, “Salvation for the Gentiles and Israel: On the Relationship between Christology and People of God in Luke,” in *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon*, trans. Wayne Coppins (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 227–46, here 242.

proclaims repentance to Israel and the nations. Paul is a rejected prophet in the mold of Jesus.

## 2. Jesus the Eschatological Prophet and Davidic Messiah in the Gospel of Luke

To set some critical context for understanding Paul's Jewishness in Acts, a look at Luke's Infancy Narrative will be helpful as it sets forth both the centrality of Luke's presentation of Jesus as Israel's Davidic Messiah *and* his birth into a prophetic people. Both themes are critical for understanding the Lukan Paul as, I will argue, the Gospel of Luke anticipates, and the Book of Acts narrates, how Jesus of Nazareth is the agent who fulfills God's promises to reconstitute the Davidic monarchy and establish an everlasting kingdom over his people. But even as Luke emphasizes Jesus's primary role as Israel's Messiah, he shows how Jesus is born into a family and a people of prophets.<sup>6</sup> Luke's Infancy Narrative (Luke 1:5–2:52) is peppered with pious Torah-observant Jews who are waiting for "the consolation of Israel" (2:25) or "the redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38). They are filled with the Holy Spirit and give prophetic utterances that interpret God's work of salvation for Israel within history (see, for example, 1:15–17; 1:41–56; 1:67; 2:28b; 2:36). Their prophetic role, evidenced especially in John the Baptist, is also seen in their task to prepare Israel for God's new work by calling the people to repentance (1:16–17, 76). More specifically, these prophetic characters engage in all kinds of liturgical expressions of praise, confession, and prayers expressing the conviction that Jesus is the one who inherits the promises made to David *and* the one who will reign *forever* as Israel's Messianic king (see Luke 1:31–35).<sup>7</sup>

Jesus's role as Davidic Messiah is indicated through:

- Gabriel's claim to Mary that her child will be called "Son of the Most High" and that God will give him "David's throne" so that "he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom shall never end" (1:32–33).
- The parallels between Luke's Infancy Narrative and 1 Sam 1–2 which centers upon stories of barren women and their royal hymns (see esp. 1 Sam 2:1–10; Luke 1:46–55).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Helpful here is Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 54–6.

<sup>7</sup> See, further, Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology*, JSNTSup 100 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> In more detail, see Sarah Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*, LNTS 558 (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 41–3.

- Luke’s note that Jesus has Davidic lineage given that Mary is engaged to Joseph – a man who is “from the house of David” (1:27). Jesus is, furthermore, born in Bethlehem “the city of David” (2:4, 11; cf. Mic 5:1).
- The use of scriptural messianic titles such as the “horn of salvation in the house of David” (1:69–70); “the dayspring from on high” (1:78–79); and the “Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord” (2:11).

The Infancy Narrative is emphatic that the target of God’s salvation through Messiah Jesus is Israel. Jesus is the agent who will fulfill the covenantal promises made to Israel’s patriarchs (1:54–55, 73–74), the embodiment of God’s visitation for the redemption of his people (1:68, 78), and the one who inaugurates “the consolation of Jerusalem” (2:38; cf. 2:25). God’s provision of Israel’s restoration is the impetus for the extension of salvation to the nations. Simeon expresses Luke’s convictions that this salvation for the nations cannot bypass Israel: “My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before the presence of all peoples, that is, a light for revelation to the nations and glory for your people Israel” (2:30–32). Israel and the nations are *distinguished* even as both are recipients of God’s salvation. Throughout Luke–Acts, in line with many of Israel’s Prophets (e.g., Isa 42:6; 49:6; 60:1–11), salvation for the gentiles requires *first* the restoration and redemption of Israel.<sup>9</sup>

Isaac Oliver helpfully summarizes how Luke 1–2 make the point that Jesus, as the Davidic Messiah, is the agent of Israel’s restoration.

The soteriological terminology in Luke 1–2, be it in the declarations of Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, or Anna, could not be more Jewish in texture. [...] Nothing in Luke’s infancy narrative suggests that this salvation for Israel should be denied, internalized, spiritualized, or transferred to another realm. Restoration is to be experienced by Israel on this earth.<sup>10</sup>

Oliver’s point cannot be stated too strongly: God is acting to help “his servant Israel” (1:54); Jesus the Messiah will reign “forever over the house of Jacob” (1:33); the salvation of God results in “glory to your people Israel” (2:32).

And yet the Lukan infancy narrative tempers one’s hopes through its characters’ frequent prophetic warnings. The task of John the Baptist, for example, is that of announcing repentance and thereby making a people ready to respond to God’s visitation of his people (1:16–17; 1:76–79; also 3:4–6; 7:27). John is called a “prophet of the Most High” (1:76) whose task is “to turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God” (1:16). His prophetic goal is to make the people ready and prepared to “see the salvation of God” (3:6). A second, and more ominous, prophetic warning is found on the lips of Simeon who immediately after his prophetic declaration of Jesus as the agent of salvation for Israel and the na-

<sup>9</sup> Isaac W. Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology: The National Restoration of Israel in Luke–Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 36–7.

<sup>10</sup> Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology*, 39.

tions, declares to Mary: "Behold this one is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that will be opposed – and even your soul will be pierced by a sword – for the revelation of the thoughts of many" (2:34b–35). Simeon testifies to what Jervell refers to as the Lukan notion of "the divided people of God," namely, how Jesus and his followers will provoke a division within Israel.<sup>11</sup> While it is possible that the "falling" and "rising" refer to a temporal sequence of Israel's experiencing judgment and then salvation, I think it more likely foreshadows the mixed response of Israel to the proclamation of Jesus's Messiahship.<sup>12</sup> Throughout Luke-Acts, Jesus's Messiahship is the "sign that will be opposed" even to the very end of the Acts of the Apostles where Paul describes how fellow Jews "oppose" him and his message (28:19, 22). Simeon's prophecy anticipates how most of Israel will reject Jesus as Israel's messianic deliverer and, yet, the oracle looks forward equally to a "rising" of Israel, that is, a day when the people will be restored.<sup>13</sup>

Jesus himself plays the role of Israel's eschatological Prophet who warns the people of God of the consequences that follow should they reject him as the messianic agent of God's visitation. For example, in Luke 11:37–54, Jesus speaks prophetic words of "woe" against the Pharisees and accuses them of continuing their ancestors' practice of rejecting the prophets: "Woe to you. For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. So you are witnesses and approve of the deeds of your ancestors; for they killed them, and you build their tombs" (11:47–48 NRSV). Note that Jesus declares that *this generation* (ἀπὸ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης, 11:50, 51) will be held responsible for "the blood" of all the rejected and killed prophets, a comment that indicates Jesus sees himself as "the consummating point of all the prophets' tragic sending."<sup>14</sup> Jesus is the final eschatological prophet calling Israel to repent and recognize the time of salvation so that it might escape divine judgment.

Similarly, in Luke 13:31–35 Jesus warns some Pharisees to welcome its divine visitation as he makes his way to Jerusalem (see 9:51–56).<sup>15</sup> His words are portentous, however, for Jesus knows that prophets are not welcomed in Jerusalem and that the people will not embrace him (13:33–34). Like Israel's Prophets who warned the people of the consequences for the Temple if they failed to repent

<sup>11</sup> See Jacob C. Jervell, "The Divided People of God: The Restoration of Israel and Salvation for the Gentiles," in *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Augsburg: Minneapolis, 1972), 41–74.

<sup>12</sup> For the former interpretation, see Mark S. Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen: The Resurrected Messiah, the Jewish People, and the Land of Promise* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 33–4.

<sup>13</sup> Oliver, *Luke's Jewish Eschatology*, 39.

<sup>14</sup> David Paul Moessner, "Paul in Acts: Preacher of Eschatological Repentance to Israel," in *Luke the Historian of Israel's Legacy, Theologian of Israel's 'Christ': A New Reading of the 'Gospel Acts' of Luke*, BZNW 182 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 292–301, here 294.

<sup>15</sup> I have written on this in more detail in *Divine Visitations and Hospitality*, 231–3.

(e.g., Ezekiel 9–11; Jeremiah 7:8–15; 12:7; 22:5), so Jesus pronounces a conditional warning of judgment against the Temple and its leaders should they reject him: “Behold your house is left to you” (13:35a).<sup>16</sup> Jesus’s final statement: “you will not see me until you say, ‘blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord’” (13:35b; Psalm 118:26) is a warning to respond to the divine visitor with the welcome of blessing. Given the Lukan use of sight as recognition, the reader understands that those who proclaim the blessing on Jesus see him as the agent of God’s visitation. Jesus’s warning is fulfilled in 19:28–40 as Jesus enters Jerusalem as Israel’s messianic lord (19:31, 33; cf. 2:11). Some in the crowd rejoice and praise God, using the language of Psalm 118:26: “Blessed is the one who comes, the King, in the name of the Lord” (19:38). The language of kingship and lordship draws the reader back to the messianic destiny and vocation marked out for Jesus in Luke’s Infancy narrative, particularly the promises that Jesus would have an everlasting kingdom as the Davidic Messiah. The people’s cry draws upon Jesus’s promise in 13:35 and thereby marks them as those who see Jesus’s entrance into Jerusalem as the messianic Lord’s coming to his city. But, of course, it is notable that within the scene there are no priests, scribes, or temple leaders; the Pharisees, in fact, demand that the Messiah silence his followers (19:39).<sup>17</sup> And this leads to Jesus’s climactic prophetic warning of judgment as he weeps that the people have rejected his offer of peace (Luke 19:41–44). The destruction of Jerusalem will be, Jesus declares using the language of Jeremiah (see Jer 6:15 LXX), “because you have not recognized the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:44b). Jesus’s words of judgement, however, do not indicate the rejection of Israel as God’s people. Again, Oliver: “Luke mixes Jesus’s condemnation of Jerusalem with an emotional quality that expresses a strong attachment to the city, an affection that Israelite prophets frequently show even when they relay oracles of judgment against their own people.”<sup>18</sup>

Allow me to make two summary comments. First, Luke depicts Jesus as the final Davidic Messiah *and* the eschatological prophet. Second, both the messianic and prophetic aspects of Lukan Christology are significant for understanding Jesus’s relationship to Israel. Given that Jesus is God’s promised Davidic Messiah whose vocation is to establish an eternal kingdom over Israel, the time of Israel’s restoration has arrived. Jesus’s prophetic role consists in calling Israel to repent by recognizing God’s eschatological visit and warning of the dire consequences of rejecting God’s salvation.

<sup>16</sup> See Klaus Baltzer, “The Meaning of the Temple in the Lukan Writings,” *HTR* 58 (1965): 263–77.

<sup>17</sup> See Brent Kinman, “Parousia, Jesus’ ‘A-Triumphal’ Entry, and the Fate of Jerusalem (Luke 19:28–44),” *JBL* 118 (1999): 279–94.

<sup>18</sup> Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology*, 79.

### 3. Paul's Proclamation of the Resurrected Messiah in the Acts of the Apostles

Luke reports two of Jesus's disciples giving voice to their belief that the crucifixion of Jesus has shattered their hopes for Israel's salvation and restoration. Their response to the resurrected-and-disguised Jesus on the Emmaus Road is as follows:

The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet powerful in word and deed before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers handed him over to the sentence of death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one about to redeem Israel (ὁ μέλλων λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ). And even more it is now three days since these things happened (Luke 24:19–21).

The words of the two disciples foreshadow what is perhaps the major theme of Acts as well as what animates the activity of the Lukan Paul, namely, how the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah constitutes the hope for Israel's salvation. That is, the two disciples voice their fear that Jesus's death marks the end of the hopes for Israel that were declared by so many pious prophetic Jews in the Lukan Infancy Narrative, whereas in fact Israel's hope of salvation is wed to the resurrection of the Messiah who is "the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23). While Israel's leaders are accountable for their sin of rejecting and crucifying Jesus, their acting in ignorance is the means whereby God's plan to resurrect the Messiah and set him at God's right hand initiates restoration for Israel and salvation for the nations. Their putting Jesus to death is, in fact, the means by which God, according to the Lukan Peter, "has fulfilled all the things which he foretold through the mouth of all the prophets, namely, that his Messiah should suffer" (3:18). Therefore, now is the time for Israel to repent and turn to God which will unleash God's promised covenantal blessings from the resurrected and enthroned-in-heaven Messiah (3:20–21).

Luke portrays Paul, then, as Torah-observant, devoted to Jerusalem, and loyal to the people of Israel. But the Lukan emphasis is clearly upon arguing the controversial claim that Paul's faithfulness to his ancestral customs and heritage consists in his proclamation that Jesus is the resurrected Davidic Messiah, the one who fulfills the hopes of Israel. Paul's proclamation reaffirms the expectations and hopes for Israel's redemption narrated in the Infancy Narrative, albeit in a new era of salvation history. As I have recently made this argument in more detail elsewhere, I will be briefer here and offer three lines of evidence which indicate how the Lukan Paul associates Israel's restoration and salvation with the resurrection of the Messiah.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jipp, "The Paul of Acts," 68–72.



### 3.1 *Paul's Formulaic Proclamation: Jesus is the Resurrected Messiah*

After Saul's transformative encounter with the risen Jesus, he proclaims that Jesus is risen from the dead. It is notable that the location for Paul's proclamation are the Jewish synagogues in Damascus (9:19–25) and Jerusalem (9:26–30). The honorifics Paul uses to proclaim the significance of Jesus are one's the reader is familiar with from the Lukan Infancy Narrative, namely, Jesus is "the Son of God" (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, 9:20; e.g., Luke 1:31–35) and "the Messiah" (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός, 9:22; Luke 2:11, 26). These summary statements preview the content of the Lukan Paul's proclamation in his later missionary journeys. So, in Thessalonica, we are told that it was Paul's regular habit to attend the synagogue meetings, just as it was Jesus's custom (κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθὸς τῷ Παύλῳ, Acts 17:2a; κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτοῦ, Luke 4:16b), and to expound from the Jewish Scriptures that: "it was necessary for the Messiah (τὸν χριστόν) to suffer and to be raised from the dead, and saying 'This is the Messiah Jesus (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός ὁ Ἰησοῦς) whom I am proclaiming to you'" (Acts 17:2b–3; cf. 17:31–32). Likewise, Luke narrates that Paul's regular habit in Corinth was to try to persuade "both Jews and Greeks" that "Jesus is the Messiah" (εἶναι τὸν χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, 18:5).

### 3.2 *Paul's Davidic-Messianic Interpretation of Israel's History and Scriptures*

In his narration of Paul's time in Pisidian Antioch, Luke offers his readers one representative scene which contains Paul's proclamation to "the sons of Israel" (9:16) in the synagogue (Acts 13:13–41). Paul's sermon is given during the weekly "reading of the Law and the Prophets" (13:15). The note that Paul is speaking "to the people" (13:15), his reference to his audience as "Israelite men and those who fear God" (13:16) and "brethren" (13:26, 28) make the point that Paul is addressing the elect people of God. Paul engages in the common literary practice of retelling the history from Israel, here beginning with God's election of Israel and redemption out of Exodus up until the time of King David. Paul's summary of Israel's history should be seen as his intentional attempt to frame and interpret the significance of Israel's history, not unlike Stephen's retelling in Acts 7, Ezra's history centering upon Israel's exile and covenant unfaithfulness (Neh 9:6–36), or the Animal Apocalypse's summary of Israel's history culminating in the remnant of faithful sheep (1 En. 90:6–12).<sup>20</sup> In other words, Paul's summary of Israel's history is preparing the reader to accept Paul's very particular and controversial interpretation of the meaning of Israel's history. I will make three points.

<sup>20</sup> On the role of retellings of the history of Israel in a variety of Jewish texts, see Robert G. Hall, *Revealed Histories: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography*, JSPSup 6 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

First, Paul's sermon is oriented toward God's reconstitution of the Davidic monarchy. Paul's interpretation of Israel's history focuses on God's consistent activity and working within his people Israel but moves quickly to its high point, namely, God's "promise" to raise up a "descendant" from David's house who would reign forever over Israel. Israel requested a King and so God gave them Saul whose disobedience resulted in God having him "removed" (13:21–22a), but God "raised up David as a king for them" since he is "a man according to my heart who will do the entirety of my will" (13:22b).<sup>21</sup> It is "from the seed of [David] (ἀπὸ τοῦ σπέρματος κατ'ἐπαγγελίαν)" that God, "according to his promise," has sent Jesus as Israel's "Savior" (13:23). The language of "promise" and "seed" clearly draw upon the oath that God made to David in 2 Sam 7:12 – "I will raise up your offspring after you who will come from your loins and I will establish his kingdom" (so also 2 Sam 22:51; 1 Chr 17:4–14; Ps 89:20–38).

Second, God has fulfilled this promise to rescue Israel through a descendant of David by raising Jesus from the dead (13:30). Paul interprets the Psalter's (Ps 16:11 [15:10 LXX]) claim that God's holy one will not "see decay" (ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν, 13:35b) to refer, not to David who "saw corruption" (εἶδεν διαφθοράν, 13:36) but to his descendent Jesus "whom God has raised, he has not seen corruption" (ὃν δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἤγειρεν, οὐκ εἶδεν διαφθοράν, 13:37a). God's resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the means whereby God establishes his plan to give one of David's descendants an everlasting reign over the people of God. God's promise is brought to fruition through his "raising up Jesus" (13:33) which is what was promised in Ps 2:7 – "You are my son. Today I have begotten you" (13:34b). Given that the entire discussion of 13:33–37 focuses upon a scriptural demonstration of Jesus's resurrection as his enthronement as the messianic king, this "raising up" makes best sense not as a reference to God's act to bring Jesus into the world but, rather, as referring to God's resurrection of the Messiah as his enthronement and installation of God's king (see also Ps 2:1–2 in Acts 4:25–27). Thus, Psalm 2, originally a declaration of God's election of the Davidic dynasty is now fulfilled in the messianic Son of God's resurrection and enthronement.<sup>22</sup>

Third, Paul's messianic interpretation of Israel's history and claim that God has raised the Messiah from the dead means that covenantal blessings of salvation are available for those who embrace Jesus. Note, for example, Paul's claim that God "has brought to Israel a Savior – Jesus" (ἤγαγεν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ σωτῆρα Ἰησοῦν, 13:23) and that his sermon is a "message of salvation" (ὁ λόγος τῆς σωτηρίας, 13:26) for the children of Israel. Paul claims that God's resurrection of the Messiah results in the unleashing of God's promise from Isa 55:3 – "I will

<sup>21</sup> See Oliver, *Luke's Jewish Eschatology*, 64.

<sup>22</sup> So Luke Timothy Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 61.

give to you the holy and faithful things of David” (δώσω ὑμῖν τὰ ὅσια Δαυὶδ τὰ πιστά, 13:34b). Oliver comments on the phrase: “Whatever its precise meaning, it seems to concern an ensemble of blessings [...] sworn to David, the fulfillment of which Paul proclaims in Acts to the people of Israel.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, God’s climactic act to reconstitute the Davidic kingdom results in justification and forgiveness of sins for Israel while grave warnings of judgment are spoken for those who would refuse to submit to the resurrected Messianic king (13:40–41).

### 3.3 *The Hope of Israel is the Resurrection of the Dead*

Paul’s defense speeches in Acts 22–28 revolve around two broad themes. First, Paul is in every way a faithful and Torah-observant Jew who is loyal to his people and his ancestral customs. He speaks Hebrew and was educated in Jerusalem (22:1–3), he believes everything written in the Law and the Prophets (24:14–15; 26:27), and he does nothing against his own people (28:17–19). But, second, Paul is emphatic that he is on trial for “the hope of Israel” which he identifies as God’s resurrection of Messiah Jesus (see 24:14–15; 26:6–8; 26:19–23; 28:17–20).<sup>24</sup> Paul does not proclaim “resurrection” or “the Messiah” as a replacement of, or in contrast to his Jewish heritage but, rather, as the true content of the Scriptures of Israel. God’s resurrection of the Messiah is the sign, the foreshadowing of the final eschatological resurrection of the dead – which Paul refers to as something “the twelve tribes” hope to obtain (26:7) and “the hope of Israel” (28:20). The Messiah is *the first* among the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 26:23a). Again, Oliver: “In Luke’s estimation, to uphold the resurrection of the messiah is to sustain the hope in the resurrection of the dead, which remains indissolubly linked with Israel’s eschatological destiny.”<sup>25</sup>

## 4. Paul is the Messiah’s Prophetic Witness to Israel and the Nations

Given the Lukan Paul’s emphatic association between Israel’s restoration and the Messiah’s resurrection, Luke’s primary characterization of Paul is that he is God’s eschatological prophet sent to both Israel and the nations in order to proclaim the necessity of repentance. Luke draws upon a variety of prophetic motifs and intertexts from both the Scriptures of Israel *and* his Gospel in order to explain why Paul’s Jewish audience so often rejects him. In what follows, I

<sup>23</sup> Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology*, 65.

<sup>24</sup> See Klaus Haacker, “Das Bekenntnis des Paulus zur Hoffnung Israels,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 437–51.

<sup>25</sup> Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology*, 128; see also Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen*, 133–4.

argue that the importance of Luke's prophetic characterization of Paul enables one to better understand how he can simultaneously be depicted as one who is loyal to the God of Israel and yet considered a pest or even an apostate by many of his Jewish contemporaries.

#### 4.1 Paul's Prophetic Commission

Luke provides three accounts of the risen Christ's initial appearance to Paul (Acts 9, 22, and 26), and scholars are right to prefer the language of call/commission (rather than conversion) to describe the event whereby Paul becomes a prophetic witness for the risen Christ.<sup>26</sup> Thus, firstly, Paul experiences not just a theophany but, rather, a Christophany (9:1-9). Note here the blinding light "from heaven" (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 9:3b), heaven now being the location of the risen Christ (e.g., 1:9-11; 2:30-36; 3:19-21),<sup>27</sup> the voice that declares "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (9:5), and the repeated title "Lord" – a Lukan designation for the resurrected Jesus (9:1, 5, 10, 11, 13). Luke speaks of Paul as one elected for a task. Thus, Paul is Christ's "chosen instrument" (σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς, 9:15); the "God of our ancestors has chosen you (προεχειρίσατό σε)" (22:14); and Christ has "appointed you" (προχειρίσασθαι σε, 26:16). Many have recognized that Paul's call conforms to the pattern of God's commissioning of Israel's Prophets – most notably that of Isaiah and Jeremiah (e.g., Isa 6:1-13; Jer 1:1-19).<sup>28</sup> For example, the risen Christ declares to Paul: "I will rescue you from the people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you" (Acts 26:17). To Jeremiah, God declares: "You will go to all to whom I send you...I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord" (Jer 1:7, 8). Or compare Acts 26:17, where the risen Christ commissions Paul "to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to the light" (Acts 26:18) with the Isaianic Servant who is appointed as "a light to the Gentiles, in order to open the eyes of the blind...who sit in darkness" (Isa 42:6-7).<sup>29</sup>

Second, the risen Christ commissions Paul with the prophetic task "to take my name before nations and kings and the children of Israel" (9:15b). The purpose of Paul's Christophany is consistently seen to be that of enabling Paul to engage in testimony to the risen Christ (Acts 22:14-16; 26:15-16). This conforms to the risen Christ's initial commission of the disciples as "my witnesses

<sup>26</sup> For example, Paul S. Minear, *To Heal and To Reveal: The Prophetic Vocation According to Luke* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976). Also, see Benjamin Hubbard, "The Role of Commissioning Accounts in Acts," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 187-98.

<sup>27</sup> See here Matthew Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts*, SNTSMS 146 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> See here, for example, Jocelyn McWhirter, *Rejected Prophets: Jesus and his Witnesses in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 117; also, Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 2 (3:1-14:28)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 1609.

<sup>29</sup> On these parallels, see Dale C. Allison Jr., *The Resurrection of Jesus: Apologetics, Polemics, History* (New York: T&T Clark, 2021), 85-6.

(μου μάρτυρες) in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and until the end of the earth (ἕως ἑσχάτου τῆς γῆς)” (1:8b). Note here that Christ’s commission is in response to their question as to whether *now* is the time when “you will restore the kingdom to Israel” (ἀποκαθιστάνεις τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ, 1:6b). Space precludes providing the necessary details, but suffice it to say that the disciples’ question raises the same expectant hopes as did the characters in the Lukan Infancy Narrative *and* that Acts also makes the closest of links between the hope of Israel *and* the resurrection of Israel’s Messiah. If Luke only has the disciples *ask* the question in order to portray them as foolish, then Luke’s emphasis here on the kingdom of God, the Spirit, the distinctly Israelite geographic language in 1:8, and the emphasis on Jesus as the enthroned Davidic Messiah are inexplicable.<sup>30</sup> Here I simply note that the language of “my witnesses” and “the ends of the earth” derive from Isa 40–66 where the people of God will function as prophetic witnesses to God’s accomplishment of salvation and restoration of Israel (Isa 43:10–12; 44:8).<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the language of “the end of the earth” also alludes to Isa 40–66 where the phrase evokes how the Servant accomplishes salvation for the gentiles. So, Isa 49:5–6:

“And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him...he says, ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth’” (NRSV).

Paul himself quotes this portion of Isaiah in his response to some Jews in Pisidian Antioch who reject his proclamation of the word of God.<sup>32</sup> He has, as Isaiah foretold, spoken God’s word *first* to the Jews and now he is taking it “to the gentiles” (13:46). Paul plays the role of the Isaianic Servant when he claims the Scriptures spoke about him: “I have appointed you as a light for the nations so that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth” (13:47). The characters of Acts, then, including Paul, play the role of the Isaianic servant in bearing witness to Israel’s restoration and salvation – an event which results in salvation going to the gentiles.<sup>33</sup>

Third, Paul is equipped for his prophetic task through divine intervention and Christophanies. For example, Christ sends him the disciple Ananias who

<sup>30</sup> I have argued this in more detail in Joshua W. Jipp, *Reading Acts* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 34–8.

<sup>31</sup> See David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 88–93.

<sup>32</sup> The explicit quotation of Isaiah 49:6 (LXX) in Acts 13:47 supports the claim that this portion of Isaiah also lies behind Acts 1:8 (and Luke 24:47). So Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 96–7.

<sup>33</sup> See here Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the ‘Servant’: Luke’s Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke-Acts*, LNTS 535 (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2015), 130–3.

grants Paul hospitality, the Holy Spirit, and baptism (9:17–19; also 22:16). The risen Christ continues to make epiphanic appearances to Paul whereby he encourages him and strengthens him for his prophetic task. For example, Paul's so-called first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–14:28) begins when the Holy Spirit speaks to the "prophets and teachers" (13:1) in Antioch: "Set apart (ἀφορίσατε) for me both Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them (εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτοῦς)" (Acts 13:2).<sup>34</sup> After experiencing hostility in Corinth, the Lord appears to Paul in a vision and says: "Do not fear, but speak and do not be silent, for I am with you and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you. For I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9–10). The promise "fear not" resonates with numerous oracles in the Scriptures of Israel, not least the mission of the Servant in Isaiah (Isa 41:10; 43:1–5; see Acts 13:47). But most important here for the Lukan Paul's mission is the commission of Jeremiah who not only proclaims God's word to Israel but is also "a prophet to the nations" (Jer 1:5b; also 1:10). So, in one account of Paul's commissioning, Christ declares, "I am sending you to [the nations]" (Acts 26:17a). God's promise to Paul is similar to his promise to Jeremiah: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord" (Jer 1:8). Christ continues to appear to Paul either to encourage him or to move him in new directions. Thus, during Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem, Luke declares "that night the Lord stood by [Paul] and said, 'Be courageous! For just as you have testified about me (διεμαρτύρω τὰ περὶ ἐμοῦ) in Jerusalem so you must testify (μαρτυρῆσαι) about me in Rome'" (23:11). While on board the ship bound for Rome, the imprisoned Paul receives visits from "God's angel" (27:23) to encourage Paul that he will indeed make it safely to Rome as will everyone on the boat (27:24–26).

#### 4.2 Paul the Rejected Prophet

The portrayal of Paul as the preacher of eschatological salvation and repentance to Israel comes to a tragic climax (for Luke) when he is rejected by his fellow Jews in Rome. I'll focus my comments here, then, primarily on Acts 28:17–31 where we see four themes which establish Paul as Israel's prophet.<sup>35</sup>

First, in Acts 28:17–20 Paul's trials parallel Jesus' trials.<sup>36</sup> Both are faithful to the Jewish law (Luke 23:14–16; 24:26–27); neither have acted against the Jewish people (Luke 23:14–15); both have been delivered into the hands of the Romans (Luke 24:7, 20); neither deserve death (Luke 23:15, 22); and both are declared innocent (Luke 23:4, 15, 22). Paul's prophetic suffering witness, then, recapitulates and follows the same pattern as that of Jesus. The parallels between Paul

<sup>34</sup> See also Acts 16:7–10.

<sup>35</sup> In more detail, see my argument in Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality*, 272–81.

<sup>36</sup> Walter Radl, *Paulus und Jesus im lukanischen Doppelwerk: Untersuchungen zu Parallelmotiven im Lukasevangelium und in der Apostelgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1975), 252–67.

and Jesus, however, are ominous as they suggest that Paul's fate will mirror that of Jesus as his fellow Jews will again reject the agent of the divine visit.

Second, Paul's chains are a sign of his loyalty to "the hope of Israel" (v. 20b). He has been called to take "the name" of the Lord not only to the Gentiles but also to "the sons of Israel" (9:15b). His regular practice of seeking out the local Jews when he arrives in a new city confirms this.<sup>37</sup> Despite opposition and persecution, Paul never ceases from proclaiming to the Jewish people that this hope of Israel has been fulfilled through the resurrection of the Messiah Jesus (23:6; 24:15; 26:6–7). Throughout the trial scenes Paul declares that he stands trial as a result of his commitment to the promised hope of Israel for which the twelve tribes have been longing (26:6–7a). Paul spends night and day trying to persuade the Roman Jews by "giving witness" to the kingdom of God based on interpretations "from the law of Moses and the Prophets" (28:23b). Paul, then, is no Jewish apostate. He is a faithful, loyal, and persistent prophet to Israel as he proclaims the fulfillment of God's promises and warns of the consequences of rejecting them. His chains, representative of the Jewish people's rejection of his message, confirm his status as God's rejected prophet to Israel.<sup>38</sup>

Third, Paul's quotation of Isa 6:9–10 marks him out as continuing the Isaianic prophetic ministry. Commentators note correctly that Luke has been saving this text for the final scene in Acts 28, but fewer comment upon Luke's decision to include the command given to the prophet: "Go to this people and say ..." (πορεύθητι πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον καὶ εἰπὸν, Acts 28:26).<sup>39</sup> The effect of Luke's inclusion of Isaiah 6:9a is that it allows the reader to identify Paul as the prophet who fulfills the command given to Isaiah. The language of the sending of the prophet reminds the reader of Paul's call to the Gentiles which, as we have seen, is also cast in the form of a prophetic call narrative (Acts 9:15–16; 18:9–10; 22:10–21; 26:15–18).<sup>40</sup> The evocation of Paul's prophetic call and his identification with God's mandate to Isaiah evoke Luke's larger literary pattern of the rejected prophet, preparing the reader for Paul's final encounter with the Jews.<sup>41</sup> The scene functions as Paul's third and final encounter with Jewish resistance to his message, resistance which has taken place in Asia at Pisidian Antioch (13:42–47), in Greece at Corinth (18:5–6), and now in Italy at Rome (28:23–28).<sup>42</sup> The

<sup>37</sup> See here Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 16:13; 17:1; 18:2–4; and 19:8.

<sup>38</sup> Paul's chains in his imprisonment are referred to in Acts 22:5, 29; 23:29; 24:27; 26:28, and 31.

<sup>39</sup> See, however, Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'*, trans. Ken McKinney, et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 225.

<sup>40</sup> David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 298–9.

<sup>41</sup> See Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*; Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 139–40.

<sup>42</sup> So also David P. Moessner, "Paul in Acts: Preacher of Eschatological Repentance to Israel," *NTS* 34 (1988): 96–104, here 101–3.



three scenes follow the pattern: a) proclamation to the Jews, b) Jewish rejection of the proclamation of the divine visit, c) a statement by Paul that he will turn to the Gentiles, and d) Gentile acceptance of Paul's message.

Paul acts the role of the prophet in Pisidian Antioch as the proclaimer of the word of God. So, Paul proclaims "a word of exhortation" (λόγος παρακλήσεως, 13:15) and "this word of salvation" (ὁ λόγος τῆς σωτηρίας ταύτης, 13:26) by means of interpreting "the Law and the Prophets" (13:15). He criticizes those leaders of Israel who put Jesus to death for their "ignorance of the words of the prophets (τὰς φωνὰς τῶν προφητῶν) which are read every sabbath" (13:27). Paul warns them lest they too act the part of those who hear the words of the prophets but reject their warnings. Furthermore, when some Jews hear "the word of the Lord" (τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου, 13:44) and then reject "the word of God" (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, 13:46), Paul (and Barnabas) performs a prophetic sign: "they shook off the dust from their feet against them" (13:51; cf. Luke 10:11). This leads to Paul's claim that he will turn to the Gentiles who "give glory to the word of the Lord" (ἐδόξαζον τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου, 13:48). Luke's concluding statement regarding Paul's prophetic ministry here is: "So the word of the Lord (ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου) spread throughout the region" (13:49). Paul is, then, clearly an agent of the divine word. Similarly, in Corinth, Paul's proclamation of the word of God is rejected by the Jews resulting in Paul, again, "shaking out his garments" (18:6; cf. Luke 10:11) as a testimony against them for their rejection of the word, and he claims that now he will go to the Gentiles (18:6b).

While the response is notably less hostile, Luke also interprets the Roman Jews' response to Paul and his message as one of rejection. After Paul's christological witness to the Jews, Luke tells the readers that "some were persuaded by his words while others did not believe" (οἱ μὲν ἐπίθοντο τοῖς λεγομένοις, οἱ δὲ ἠπίστουν, 28:24). Luke's narration of a mixed response is stereotypical (cf. Acts 2:12–13; 13:42–45; 17:32–34; 18:4), and there is no reason to deny that Luke presents some Jews as convinced by Paul's message. Yet given the heightened intensity of the scene it is apparent that Luke intends that the reader view Paul's preaching as an anticlimactic failure. Luke's emphasis is found in the tragedy that Paul's preaching about Jesus produces "disunity" in the Jewish people (ἄσύμφωνοι δὲ ὄντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους, 28:25). Luke's portraits of the unity of the early Christian community and their ability to overcome conflict (e.g., Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35; 8:1–25; 10:1–11:18) stand in contrast to the division of the Jewish people in Acts 28:24–25.<sup>43</sup> Further, the disunity of the Roman Jews stands in contrast to the unity of the witness of Paul, the Prophet Isaiah, and the Holy Spirit who all agree in their "one word" of judgment: "Paul spoke *one word*,

<sup>43</sup> So David W. Pao, "Disagreement among the Jews in Acts 28," in *Early Christian Voices: in Texts, Traditions, and Symbols: Essays in Honor of Francois Bovon*, ed. David H. Warren, Ann Graham Brock, and David W. Pao, BiInS 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 109–18.



‘Rightly did the Holy Spirit speak through the Prophet Isaiah to your fathers.’” (εἰποντός τοῦ Παύλου ῥῆμα ἐν, ὅτι καλῶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐλάλησεν διὰ Ἰσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν, 28:25b). As a result of their rejection, Paul takes on the role of the prophet Isaiah while the people take on the guise of the ancient Israelites who rejected the prophets. Paul identifies the Roman Jews with the people of Isaiah’s time by referring to the latter as “your fathers” (28:25b; cf. Luke 6:23; 11:48; 13:33–34; Acts 7:51–53).<sup>44</sup>

Fourth, Paul speaks a prophetic word of judgment to the unbelieving portion of Israel. Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9–10 in full as a message of judgment against them. They have had ample opportunity to “hear” (ἀκοῇ ἀκούσετε) and “see” (βλέποντες βλέψετε) but their sensory perceptions are dull and hardened (28:26b). Luke heightens the intensity of the scene and the literary finality of Paul’s mission to the Jews by moving the Isaiah 6 quotation from Jesus’ Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:12; Matt 13:14–15) and saving the bulk of it for this final scene. In Luke 8:10 Jesus explains that to those who do not receive the mystery of the kingdom, the parables work such that “while seeing they may not see and while hearing they may not understand” (Luke 8:10b). But the full quotation is not yet used against them in judgment. The first rejection of the divine visitation through Jesus is explained briefly with the short quote from Isaiah, but the final rejection of the *second visitation* through the prophetic emissaries receives a note of rebuke with a full citation of Isa 6:9–10 and occurring as it does at the end of the narrative.<sup>45</sup>

The inability of the Roman Jews to “see” God’s salvation is ironic and tragic given that one of the fundamental components of Jesus’ ministry was to give sight to the blind.<sup>46</sup> In his inaugural and programmatic sermon in Nazareth, Jesus quotes Isa 61:1 and declares that the Spirit of the Lord “has sent me...to open the eyes for the blind” (Luke 4:18). Given that the healing of blindness is one of the main components of Jesus’ mission, one finds that vision and the healing of blindness function as metaphors for salvation and the recognition of God’s salvation throughout Luke-Acts (see Luke 7:21–23; 10:23–24; 18:35–43; Acts 9:1–19; 26:18).<sup>47</sup> The connection between vision and God’s salvation is stated clearly by Simeon who, upon encountering the child Jesus gave praise to God and declared: “my eyes have seen your salvation” (Luke 2:30). This salvation is said to be not only for Israel but also “a light of revelation for the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32a; cf. Acts 13:47). But already in Jesus’ promise to heal the blind

<sup>44</sup> See also Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 225; Susan Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation and Community Self-Definition in Luke-Acts and the Writings of Justin Martyr*, NovTSup 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 193–5.

<sup>45</sup> So also Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 476; Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 105.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Robert C. Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 69–85.

<sup>47</sup> See Dennis Hamm, “Sight to the Blind: Vision as Metaphor in Luke,” *Bib* 67 (1986): 457–77.

there is an ominous note of rejection sounded by the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:25–27), foreshadowing that Jesus' promised healing will not be embraced by everyone. Further, in Luke 3:4–6 John the Baptist quotes another Isaianic text at length, this time Isa 40:3–5, which ends with the promise that “all flesh *will* see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6).<sup>48</sup> Here too salvation is something that is seen by all peoples, but again it is something which will not be met with full acceptance (Luke 3:7–9). Luke's literary project is, then, bracketed by Isaianic references to sight and blindness. Between this Isaianic inclusio centering on sight, light, and salvation (Luke 3:4–6; 4:18–19 and Acts 28:25–28), Luke also narrates Paul's mission through an Isaianic lens whereby Paul's task is to illuminate the Gentiles with God's salvific light: “for so has the Lord commanded us: ‘I have appointed you as a light to the Gentiles (εἰς φῶς ἔθνῶν) so that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth” (Acts 13:47; Isa 49:6). Before Herod Agrippa II Paul summarizes his prophetic ministry as an encounter with the exalted Lord who commissions Paul “to open their [i.e., Jews and Gentiles] eyes” (ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν) and to bring them “to the light” (εἰς φῶς, 26:18; cf. 26:23). Thus, the Gospel begins with the promise of the vision of God's salvation for “all flesh” and “Gentiles” (Luke 3:6//Isa 40:3; cf. Luke 2:30–32) and with Jesus' mission to give sight to the blind (Luke 4:18//Isa 61:1), a prophetic mission which is continued in Acts by the apostolic witnesses who are commissioned by the exalted Lord to bring light to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47 and 26:18//Isa 49:6), but concludes with a judgment against the Jews who have “seen” but not “perceived” and have closed their eyes to God's salvific healing (τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμυσαν, 28:27b). Isaac Oliver strikes the right balance between judgment and hope for Israel: “Luke accordingly cites Isa 6:9–10 to account for the *present* condition of the Jewish people rather than to deny Israel's *future* restoration. At the end of Acts, Luke reaches an impasse.”<sup>49</sup>

## 5. Conclusion: The Lukan Paul's “Jewishness” in Acts

In this essay, I have argued that the Lukan Paul's relationship to his Jewish heritage is best understood by way of Luke's two major christological categories: messianism and prophecy. Paul's messianic convictions results in a strong appropriation of Israel's ancestral heritage. Lukan messianic Christology has direct implications for understanding his view of the people of God. On the one hand, there is no doubt that Luke wants his audience to embrace the view that Paul is Torah-observant, faithful to his ancestral customs, and loyal to his own people. Nevertheless, he does not shy away from tackling what must have been

<sup>48</sup> On this cluster of Isaianic texts, see Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 105–9.

<sup>49</sup> Oliver, *Luke's Jewish Eschatology*, 135.

a significant perception of Paul as an apostate from Moses and as one who provokes his fellow Jewish contemporaries. It is not just that Paul equates the hope of Israel with the resurrection from the dead that is disruptive; rather, it is Paul's argument that the hope of Israel has surprisingly taken place, at least as a foretaste, through Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified, resurrected, and now enthroned-in-heaven Messiah that provokes controversy. God's resurrection of the Messiah has inaugurated Israel's restoration but full restoration, the final resurrection of the dead, requires repentance and an embrace of the messianic king. It seems easy to imagine listening to Paul's sermon, for example, in Pisidian Antioch and agreeing with Paul's Davidic-messianic interpretation of Israel's Scriptures and history *or* advancing arguments that would contest his interpretation and offer a different alternative. The starting point, however, would depend upon whether one grants Paul's claim that God has indeed raised Jesus from the dead and enthroned him to a position of heavenly rule.

Luke portrays Paul as a prophet of the risen Messiah in order to explain his task of calling both Israel and the nations to repentance as well as to establish a precedent that legitimates his (and Jesus's) rejection by most of his Jewish contemporaries. Luke employs a variety of prophetic motifs and prophetic scriptural intertexts that work to establish Paul's task as consisting in testimony to the risen Messiah and to explain why his mission was consistently rejected by his fellow Jewish contemporaries. Acceptance of Luke's pro-Jewish depiction of the Lukan Paul should not be at the expense or minimization that Luke is positive regarding Jews who believe in Jesus as Israel's Messiah. Those Jews who do not believe Jesus is the Messiah are characterized as those who reject and kill the prophets, that is, they are "jealous" (5:17; 13:45; 17:5), instigate mob violence (e.g., 7:54–60; 14:1–7, 19; 17:5–9), and are blind to the meaning and significance of their own institutions and Scriptures (e.g., Luke 19:41–44; Acts 28:25–28). This puts one in the place of simultaneously affirming that the Lukan Paul does not in any way reject God's election of Israel or as replacing Judaism with Christianity *but also* where the significance of God's election of Israel is found in Jesus the Messiah and where those who oppose Paul and reject his message find themselves excluded from their own covenantal blessings (13:46; 18:6; 28:25–28).

# The Theophany of the Resurrected Messiah

## The “Jewish” Christology of Paul’s Speeches in Acts

Murray J. Smith

### 1. Paul’s Christology: How Jewish? How High?

In discussions of the apostle Paul’s relationship to Judaism, the question of Christology is never far from the surface. Among those recently seeking to locate “Paul within Judaism,”<sup>1</sup> Paula Fredriksen argues that while Paul makes “very high claims for Jesus,” he stops short of identifying Jesus *as* God.<sup>2</sup> In making this case, Fredriksen takes issue with what she calls the “Big Bang Christology” championed by other members of the “Early High Christology Club,”<sup>3</sup> and warns against the danger of anachronistically reading Nicaea and Chalcedon back onto Paul.<sup>4</sup> Her case, like that of her interlocutors, understandably focusses on Paul’s letters. My goal in this essay, however, is to advance this discussion of Paul and the origins of “Christological monotheism” by approaching it from a different angle – the Christology of Paul’s speeches in the book of Acts.<sup>5</sup> In approaching the question from this angle, I make no attempt to assess the historical veracity of Acts’ portrait of Paul’s Christology, or to compare it

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the “Paul within Judaism” approach, see esp. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 1–30; Paula Fredriksen, “What Does It Mean to See Paul ‘within Judaism’?,” *JBL* 141:2 (2022): 359–80.

<sup>2</sup> Paula Fredriksen, “How High Can Early High Christology Be?,” in *Monotheism and Christology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Matthew V. Novenson, NovTSup 180 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 293–320.

<sup>3</sup> Fredriksen primarily engages David B. Capes, Richard J. Bauckham, Larry W. Hurtado, and Carey C. Newman, especially their essays in Novenson, *Monotheism and Christology*.

<sup>4</sup> Fredriksen, “How High?,” 293–5.

<sup>5</sup> For recent surveys and analysis of the debate see esp.: Jörg Frey, “Eine neue religionsgeschichtliche Perspektive: Larry W. Hurtados *Lord Jesus Christ* und die Herausbildung der frühen Christologie,” in *Reflections on the Early Christian History of Religion. Erwägungen zur frühchristlichen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Jörg Frey, AJEC 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 117–69; Brandon D. Smith, “What Christ Does, God Does: Surveying Recent Scholarship on Christological Monotheism,” *CBR* 17:2 (2019): 184–208; David B. Capes, “New Testament Christology,” in *The State of New Testament Studies*, ed. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 161–81; Larry W. Hurtado, “The New *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* at Thirty: Observations by a Participant,” in Novenson, *Monotheism and Christology*, 9–31.

systematically with Paul's letters.<sup>6</sup> My limited goal is to assess the testimony of the book of Acts to Paul's Christology, with a view to answering the questions implied by my title: "how Jewish is it?" and "how high?"<sup>7</sup>

My broad thesis is that Paul's Christology in Acts is thoroughly Jewish, but also remarkably new: while all of his primary categories are drawn from the Scriptures of Israel, and many of his major affirmations find parallels in early Judaism, Paul's specific Christological configurations are shaped by the history of Jesus of Nazareth and, especially, by his theophanic visions of Jesus on the road to Damascus and in the Jerusalem temple. My primary contention is that, in the book of Acts, Paul proclaims Jesus not only as the crucified-and-risen Davidic Messiah, but as the one who embodies the very presence of Israel's God. In what follows, I examine each of Paul's major public speeches as he proclaims Jesus in increasingly exalted terms as the Saviour of Israel (13:16–41, 46–47), the Judge of the nations (17:22–31), the Lord of his church (20:17–35), and the very presence of God (22:1–21; 24:10–21; 26:2–29). The final section offers a synthesis and assessment.

## 2. The Saviour of Israel: The Christology of Paul's Synagogue Exhortation in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41, 46–47)

Paul's "word of encouragement" (13:15: λόγος παρακλήσεως) in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (13:16–41, 46–47) is the book of Acts' most extended presentation of his preaching of Jesus among the Jews. This speech appears as a model of the Scriptural reasoning Paul regularly employed in his ministry to the Jews (cf. 14:1; 17:2–3; 18:5; 28:23),<sup>8</sup> and primarily presents Jesus as the Saviour of Israel.

Three features of the speech locate Paul's proclamation firmly within Judaism. First, in the three vocative addresses which structure the speech, Paul identifies his audience in classic Jewish categories: he speaks to "Men of Israel" (13:16: ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται), "sons of the family of Abraham" (13:26: υἱοὶ γένους Ἀβραάμ), and "brothers" (13:26, 38: ἀδελφοί).<sup>9</sup> Second, Paul employs a classic

<sup>6</sup> For the issues here, see Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012–2015), 1:221–319; Isaac W. Oliver, "The 'Historical Paul' and the Paul of Acts," in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 51–80.

<sup>7</sup> For the sake of simplicity, I refer to "Paul" rather than "the Lukan Paul" or "Luke's presentation of Paul," or "the testimony of Acts to Paul." These more cumbersome phrases should be assumed throughout.

<sup>8</sup> Similarly, K. L. Anderson, "*But God Raised Him from the Dead*": *The Theology of Jesus' Resurrection in Luke-Acts*, PBM (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 235; Brandon D. Crowe, *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 49.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Acts 13:16, 26: "God-fearers" (οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν). For a survey of structural

Third, and most significantly, Paul's characterization of Jesus – especially in the middle section of the speech (13:26–37) – is thoroughly Jewish. In broad terms, Paul draws on the language of the Psalms and Isaiah when he declares that in proclaiming Jesus, he is “bringing good news” to Israel (13:32: εὐαγγελιζόμεθα; cf. 14:15), “the word of salvation” (13:26: ὁ λόγος τῆς σωτηρίας).<sup>13</sup> More specifically, Paul picks up his earlier proclamation of Jesus as “Christ” (ὁ χριστός), “Son of God” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), and “Lord” (ὁ κύριος) (9:20, 22, 28), and develops these categories, which are central to his preaching of Jesus throughout Acts.<sup>14</sup> In particular, Paul characterizes Jesus as the Davidic Messiah when he declares that it is from David's “offspring” (σπέρμα) that “God has brought to Israel a Saviour [...] as he promised” (13:23: ὁ θεὸς [...] κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν ἤγαγεν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ σωτῆρα),<sup>15</sup> and when he identifies Jesus as “the Son” prophe-

<sup>15</sup> Note, especially, the language of “promise” (ἐπαγγελία) and “offspring” / “seed” (σπέρμα), which – connected with “David” (Acts 13:22–23) – evokes God’s promise to David (2 Sam 7:12: אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי דָוִד / καὶ ἀναστήσω τὸ σπέρμα σου μετὰ σέ), and the biblical “seed”

sied in Psalm 2:7 (13:32–33). In these ways, Paul roots his proclamation of Jesus in Israel's Scriptures, declaring that those Scriptures have reached their divinely appointed climax in him (cf. Rom 1:2; 16:26; 1 Cor 15:3–4; 2 Tim 3:15).

At the same time, as Paul himself recognizes, his proclamation of the gospel of Jesus involves a reading of Israel's Scriptures, and a configuration of messiahship, which is genuinely novel within early Judaism (13:27). Five features of the speech are significant. First, while the Scriptures do not “in direct terms, anticipate a *χριστός* who would suffer and die,”<sup>16</sup> and there is no strong early Jewish parallel for a *crucified* Messiah, Paul asserts that the condemnation of Jesus “fulfilled the utterances of the prophets” (13:27: ἐπλήρωσαν [...] τὰς φωνὰς τῶν προφητῶν), and that, in crucifying Jesus, his enemies “completed all that was written of him” (13:29: ἐτέλεσαν πάντα τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένα).<sup>17</sup> Paul does not here cite or allude to any specific biblical texts, but – as elsewhere – affirms generally that “the prophets” predicted the suffering of the Messiah.<sup>18</sup> G. R. Lanier points to four possible biblical sources for this affirmation, namely, “the ‘Suffering Servant’ (Isa 52–53), the righteous sufferer of the psalms, the violent fate of the prophets, and the eschatological role of various ‘saviour’ or ‘anointed’ figures.”<sup>19</sup> He rightly concludes, however, that Paul’s general appeals to Scripture “reflect what appears to be a burgeoning apostolic hermeneutic” according to which “the entire OT is retrospectively seen as containing a messianology of suffering.”<sup>20</sup> In the context of the wider narrative of Luke-Acts, Paul’s state-

(יְרִיעָה / σπέρμα) promise which stands behind it (Gen 3:15; 15:5; 17:7–8). Cf. Rita F. Cefalu, “The Sufferings and Glory of Jesus the Messiah in Acts 2–3,” in *The Seed of Promise: The Sufferings and Glory of the Messiah*, ed. Paul R. Williamson and Rita F. Cefalu (Wilmore: Glossa House, 2020), 285–98.

<sup>16</sup> Gregory R. Lanier, “‘As It Is Written’... Where? Examining Generic Citations of Scripture in the New Testament,” *JSNT* 43:4 (2021): 570–604, here 578.

<sup>17</sup> Two possible exceptions provide only weak parallels. (1.) 4 Ezra 7:29 announces that “my Son the Messiah shall die,” perhaps reflecting on Dan 9:25–26 (see Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 216, n. 59). This text, however, likely dates from “the time of Domitian (81–96 C.E.)” (*Fourth Ezra*, 10), and thus post-dates Paul, and (likely also) Acts. (2.) Targum Pseudo-Jonathan identifies the Isaianic “servant” (Isa 52–53) as the Messiah (Tg. Ps.-J. on Isa 52:13: עֲבָדִי מְשִׁיחָא [“my servant, the Messiah”]; 53:10: מְלִיכֻת מְשִׁיחָא [“in the kingdom of their Messiah”]). This text, however, also post-dates Paul, and sees in the text a triumphant rather than a suffering Messiah (see Jostein Ådna, “The Servant of Isaiah 53 as Triumphant and Interceding Messiah: The Reception of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 in the Targum of Isaiah with Special Attention to the Concept of the Messiah,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 189–224).

<sup>18</sup> Acts 17:2–3; 26:22–23; Rom 3:21, 25; 1 Cor 15:3; cf. Luke 24:25–27, 44–47; Acts 3:18; 1 Pet 1:10–11.

<sup>19</sup> Lanier, “As It Is Written,” 578–9. Cf. Kenneth D. Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God’s People Intertextually*, JSNTSup 282 (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 119–41.

<sup>20</sup> Lanier, “As It Is Written,” 579. Lanier here refers specifically to Acts 3:18 and 17:2–3; 26:22–23, but his assessment applies equally well to Acts 13:27, 29.



ments may especially evoke the biblical pattern highlighted in Stephen's speech according to which God's people reject those sent to them – first Moses (7:25, 27, 35, 39), then the prophets (7:52), and now “the Righteous One,” Christ (7:52–53).<sup>21</sup> More specifically, his reference to Jesus's cross as “the tree” (13:29: τὸ ξύλον) probably relies on Deuteronomy's solemn affirmation that the one hung on a “tree” (ῥῡ / ξύλον) is “cursed by God” (Deut 21:22–23; cf. Gal 3:13).<sup>22</sup> Further, given the prominence of Isa 52–53 in Christian interpretation of Jesus's suffering, not least in Luke–Acts, Paul's affirmation likely also evokes that prophetic text.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Paul's characterization of Jesus as the rejected and suffering Messiah is profoundly biblical, being rooted in the Law and the Prophets, even as it also appears as a novelty within early Judaism.

Second, and similarly, Paul's affirmation of Jesus's resurrection is simultaneously deeply biblical and remarkably new (13:30–37). The biblical promise of resurrection is rooted in the identity of Israel's God as “the living God,” the “creator of the ends of the earth,”<sup>24</sup> and is thus far more pervasive in all three divisions of Israel's Scriptures than has often been recognized.<sup>25</sup> Since, however, the explicit promise of bodily resurrection only appears in the Prophets and the Writings,<sup>26</sup> the resurrection hope, while accepted among the Pharisees and at Qumran,<sup>27</sup> was rejected by the Sadducees.<sup>28</sup> Crucially, however, there is no evidence for Jewish expectation that the Messiah would be raised, on his own, in the “middle of history,” ahead of the resurrection of all God's people, at the end.<sup>29</sup> Paul's proclamation of Jesus as “the first to rise from the dead” (26:23: πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν) is, therefore, unprecedented in early Judaism.

Third, and closely related to this, Paul's identification of Jesus as the resurrected “Son of God” is, again, both deeply biblical, and startlingly new (13:30–37). In biblical perspective, “Son of God” is primarily a covenantal category, and is used metaphorically to describe the filial relationship between God and

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 2:2067. For Luke's theme of ironic fulfilment in Jesus's death, see: Jerry L. Ray, *Narrative Irony in Luke–Acts: The Paradoxical Interaction of Prophetic Fulfillment and Jewish Rejection*, MBPS 28 (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1996), 155–6.

<sup>22</sup> Note also: Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Pet 2:24. Cf. Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1965), 142.

<sup>23</sup> UBS<sup>5</sup> identifies allusions to Isa 53 in Luke 22:37; 23:33–34; 24:27, 46; Acts 8:32–33; 10:43. For extended discussion, see: Peter Stuhlmacher, “Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts,” in Janowski and Stuhlmacher, *The Suffering Servant*, 147–62.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Isa 40:28; Jer 10:10; Dan 6:20, 26; Hos 1:10.

<sup>25</sup> See esp. J. D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Job 19:23–27; Isa 25:6–7; 26:19; Ezek 37:1–14; Dan 12:1–2, 13; Hos 13:14.

<sup>27</sup> Josephus, *A.J.* 18.11–25; 4Q521 frg. 2+4 ii, 12; frg. 7+5 ii, 6–12; Acts 23:6–9; 24:15.

<sup>28</sup> Luke 20:27–40; Acts 23:6–9; 24:15. See N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, COQG 3 (London: SPCK, 2003), 129–206.

<sup>29</sup> So Wright, *Resurrection*, 372, 415; idem, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, COQG 4 (London: SPCK, 2013), 1046, 1099, 1101, 1211.



his human covenant partners, first Adam (Gen 1:26–28 with 5:1–3; cf. Luke 3:38), then Israel (Exod 4:22–23; Jer 31:20; Hos 11:1),<sup>30</sup> then David and his descendants (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 22:10; 28:6; Ps 2:7).<sup>31</sup> Following this trajectory, “Son of God” functions as a messianic title in some texts from Qumran (4Q246 II, 1; 4Q174 I, 11 citing 2 Sam 7:14),<sup>32</sup> and in Fourth Ezra (7:28–29; 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9).<sup>33</sup> Paul draws on this biblical trajectory to declare Jesus as the messianic “Son of God,” but further connects this identity – in an entirely unprecedented manner – to Jesus’s resurrection from the dead (13:32–33). Nevertheless, Paul sees Jesus’s resurrection and ascension prefigured in God’s “lifting up” (ὑψωσεν) of his typological “son,” Israel, in the Exodus (13:17),<sup>34</sup> and in God’s “raising up” (ἡγειρεν) of his royal “son,” David, to the kingship (13:22–23).<sup>35</sup> He identifies, further, three Scriptures – Ps 2:7 (13:33), Isa 55:3 (13:34), and Ps 16:10 (13:35) – which, he declares, speak prophetically of Messiah Jesus’s resurrection to incorruptible life. Indeed, Paul also finds the theological ground for Jesus’s resurrection in these texts: unlike David, the typological “son” who “saw corruption” for his sin, Jesus is the LORD’s “Holy One” (τὸν ὁσίον) – his perfectly obedient Son – whom the LORD would not allow to “see corruption” (ιδεῖν διαφθοράν) (13:35–36 citing Ps 16:10 [15:10 LXX]),<sup>36</sup> and so raised from the dead (cf. Acts 2:24–32).<sup>37</sup> These connections between the Messiah’s obedient life, resurrection, and identity as “Son of God” find clear parallels in Paul’s letters, where Jesus’s perfect obedience (esp. Rom 5:18–19; cf. Phil 2:8) provides the ground for his resurrection and exaltation as “Son of God in power” (Rom 1:3–4; cf. Phil 2:9–11).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Cf. plural constructions in Deut 14:1; 32:19; Isa 1:2. Note also God as “Father” of Israel: Deut 32:6; Ps 103:13; Isa 63:16; 64:7; Jer 3:4, 19; 31:9; Mal 1:6; 2:10.

<sup>31</sup> Angels appear as “sons of God,” but always in the plural (Job 1:6; Ps 29:1; 89:7).

<sup>32</sup> Tucker S. Ferda, “Naming the Messiah: A Contribution to the 4Q246 ‘Son of God’ Debate,” *DSD* 21:2 (2014): 150–75; Ruben A. Bühner, *Hohe Messianologie: Übermenschliche Aspekte eschatologischer Heilsgestalten im Frühjudentum*, WUNT 2/523 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 283–92; idem, *Messianic High Christology: New Testament Variants of Second Temple Judaism* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021), 114–8.

<sup>33</sup> Michael E. Stone, “The Concept of the Messiah in 4 Ezra,” in *Religions in Antiquity: E. R. Goodenough Memorial*, ed. Jacob Neusner, SHR 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 295–312; Bühner, *Hohe Messianologie*, 152–71; idem, *Messianic High Christology*, 75–82.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Luke 1:52; Acts 2:33; 5:31 which employ ὑψώω to speak of Jesus’s exaltation.

<sup>35</sup> In Acts 13:23 several MSS read ἡγειρεν (“he has raised up”; cf. Jdg 3:9 LXX) rather than ἡγαγεν (“he has brought”). While ἡγαγεν is likely original, the presence of ἡγειρεν in the textual tradition indicates that early readers of Acts recognized Paul’s emphasis on Jesus’s resurrection in this speech. See Crowe, *Hope of Israel*, 50–2.

<sup>36</sup> In Acts 13:36–37, Paul employs yet other Scriptures to interpret Psalm 16:10, arguing from the record in 1 Kgs 2:10 – that David “fell asleep” (ἐκοιμήθη), “was laid with his fathers” (προσετέθη πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας αὐτοῦ), and “saw corruption” (εἶδεν διαφθοράν) – that the psalm does not apply to David himself but to his promised seed, Jesus.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Crowe, *Hope of Israel*, 64.

<sup>38</sup> Acts 13:22–23, 33–34 and Rom 1:1–4 share reference to: (1.) God’s “promise” (ἐπαγγελία / προεπαγγέλλω); (2.) “the gospel” (εὐαγγελίζω / εὐαγγέλιον); (3.) the “seed of David” (ἀπὸ

There is, moreover, at least a hint in Paul's declaration of Jesus as "Son of God" that he is also the pre-existent, divine "Son". Israel's Scriptures anticipate the pre-existence, and even the divinity, of certain eschatological "son" figures,<sup>39</sup> and some early Jewish texts develop this expectation.<sup>40</sup> Certainly, in Luke-Acts, Jesus's identity as "Son of God" evinces both messianic and divine dimensions,<sup>41</sup> not least in Paul's initial proclamation of Jesus as "Son of God" (9:20), which immediately follows his encounter with the heavenly Lord on the Damascus Road (9:3–5).<sup>42</sup> In this context, Paul's declaration of Jesus's enthronement as the royal "Son of God" (13:33–37; cf. Luke 24:26) suggests that his resurrection and ascension are the eschatological manifestation of his identity as the eternal, divine "Son."<sup>43</sup> This understanding again finds a parallel in Paul's letters, where the apostle speaks not merely of Jesus's "descent" from David, but of the divine Son's *incarnation* in the line of David – he "became" (τοῦ γενομένου) Son "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα) – followed by his *enthronement* in power (Rom 1:3; cf. Phil 2:6–7).<sup>44</sup> Paul, then, draws a line, in an unprecedented manner, from the divine "Son's" pre-existence, to his incarnation, obedient life, resurrection, and exaltation.

Fourth, Paul's characterization of Jesus as "Saviour" (13:23: σωτήρ) is similarly rooted in Scripture, but unusual in early Judaism.<sup>45</sup> While Greco-Roman

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τοῦ σπέρματος + Δαυὶδ / ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ); (4.) Jesus as "son of God" (Υἱός μου εἰ σύ / υἱοῦ θεοῦ), and; (5.) "raise" / "resurrection from the dead" (ἐγείρω / ἀνίστημι / ἀνέστησεν αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν / ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν). The significance of the parallel is well recognized. E.g. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1987), 113; Frederick F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, ed. Gordon D. Fee, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 270; Wright, *Resurrection*, 451; Crowe, *Hope of Israel*, 57.

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Ps 45:7; Ezek 37:25; Dan 7:13–14; Mic 5:1. Cf. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Christology and Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 1–49.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Ps 109:3 LXX; 1 En. 39:6–7; 46:1–2; 48:2–3, 6; 62:7; 4 Ezra 12:32; 13:26, 52. Cf. John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 235–6; Böhner, *Hohe Messianologie*, 65–73, 102–05, 134–37, 160–62.

<sup>41</sup> For Jesus as "Son of God" in Luke-Acts, see: Luke 1:32, 35; 3:22, 38; 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 9:35; 10:21–22; 20:41–44; 22:28–30, 70; Acts 9:20; 13:33. The divine dimension is especially evident in Luke 1:32–35; 3:22; 9:35; 10:21–22; 20:41–44; 22:28–30; Acts 9:20. For discussion, see esp. Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 231–42, 281–2.

<sup>42</sup> See § 5.2 below for the Damascus Road encounter as a theophany.

<sup>43</sup> Crowe, *Hope of Israel*, 57–61.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Geerhardus Vos, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of Spirit," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1980), 104–5; Matthew W. Bates, "A Christology of Incarnation and Enthronement: Romans 1.3–4 as Unified, Nonadoptionist, and Non-conciliatory," *CBQ* 77 (2015): 107–27, here 115–23.

<sup>45</sup> ⲡ<sup>74</sup> E L Ⲙ, and several minuscules, read σωτηρίαν ("salvation"), but σωτήρα ("saviour") is more likely original. It is found in the major Codices Ⲛ A B C Ψ, several minuscules, the Vulgate, Syriac, Sahidic, and Bohairic versions, and citations in Athanasius and Theodoret.

sources commonly designate human benefactors, including the emperor, as “Saviour,”<sup>46</sup> Luke-Acts especially relates Jesus’s identity as “Saviour” to Israel (Luke 1:47; 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23).<sup>47</sup> It is therefore significant that while the Scriptures occasionally refer to human deliverers, especially the Judges, as God-given “saviours” (יְשׁוּעָה / σωτήρ or יִשׁוּעַ / σῶζω),<sup>48</sup> they far more commonly identify God himself as Israel’s “Saviour” (יְשׁוּעָה or יִשׁוּעַ / σωτήρ), or “salvation” (יִשׁוּעַ / σωτηρία or יְשׁוּעָה / σωτήριον),<sup>49</sup> or celebrate the LORD God as the one who “saves” (יִשׁוּעַ / σῶζω).<sup>50</sup> In the Psalms and the Prophets, especially Isaiah, the LORD emphatically declares that he alone is the “Saviour” of his people; there is no other.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, the Scriptures never refer to the Messiah or any other eschatological deliverer as “Saviour,” and this emphasis continues in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, where “the title σωτήρ [...] is confined to God”.<sup>52</sup> It is striking, therefore, that while God appears once as “Saviour” (σωτήρ) in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:47), it is especially Jesus who appears in this role (Luke 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23).<sup>53</sup> Consistent with this, Paul declares this it is Jesus who now

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This reading is also supported by Luke-Acts’ identification of Jesus as σωτήρ (Luke 2:11; Acts 5:31). Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 359.

<sup>46</sup> Gary Gilbert, “Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity in the Worldview of Luke-Acts,” in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline V. Stichele, SBLSymS 20 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 237–42.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 17 ed., KEK 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 208, n. 576.

<sup>48</sup> The substantives יְשׁוּעָה / σωτήρ are applied to human “saviours” at: Judg 3:9, 15; Neh 9:27 [pl.]; Obad 21; cf. 2 Kgs 13:5 [LXX: σωτηρίαν]; Isa 19:20 [LXX: ἄνθρωπον, ὃς σώσει αὐτούς]. The verbs יִשׁוּעַ / σῶζω describe the actions of human “saviours” throughout the book of Judges, but it is clear that, properly speaking, the LORD saves Israel, *through* human “saviours” (esp. Judg 2:16, 18; 3:9; 6:36; 7:2, 7; 10:12–14).

<sup>49</sup> Gen 49:18; Exod 14:13; 15:2; Deut 32:15; 1 Sam 2:1; 10:19; 14:45; 2 Sam 22:3 [x2], 5, 36, 47, 51; 1 Chr 16:23, 35; 2 Chr 20:17; Ps 3:3, 9; 9:15; 12:6; 13:6; 14:7; 18:3, 36, 47, 51; 20:6; 21:2, 6; 24:5; 25:5; 27:1, 9; 28:8; 35:3, 9; 42:6, 12; 43:5; 44:5; 50:23; 51:14; 53:7; 62:2–3, 7–8; 65:6; 67:3; 68:20; 69:14, 30; 70:5; 74:12; 78:22; 79:9; 80:3; 85:5, 8, 10; 89:27; 91:16; 95:1; 96:2; 98:2; 106:4, 21; 116:13; 118:14, 21; 119:123, 155, 166, 174; 132:16; 140:8; 149:4; Isa 12:2 [x2]; 17:10; 25:9; 26:1; 33:2, 6; 43:3, 11; 45:8, 15, 21; 49:6, 8 (mediated by the LORD’s “servant”), 26 [LXX: ὁ ρησάμενός]; 51:5–6, 8; 52:7, 10; 56:1; 59:17; 60:16; 61:10; 62:1, 11; 63:8; Jer 14:8; Hos 13:4; Jon 2:10; Mic 7:7; Hab 3:13, 18.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. Exod 14:30; Num 10:9; Deut 33:29; Judg 2:18; 1 Sam 10:19; 14:39; 17:47; 2 Sam 22:4; 23:12; 1 Chr 11:14; 18:6; Ps 3:8; 6:5; 7:2, 10; 12:2; 17:7; 18:4, 28; 20:7, 10; 22:22; 28:9; 31:3, 17; 34:7, 19; 36:7; 37:40; 44:8; 54:3; 55:17; 57:4; 59:3; 60:7; 69:2, 36; 71:2–3; 72:4, 13; 76:10; 80:4, 8, 20; 86:2, 16; 98:1; 106:8, 10, 47; 107:13, 19; 108:7; 109:26, 31; 116:6; 118:25; 119:94, 117, 146; 138:7; 145:19; Isa 25:9; 30:15; 33:22; 35:4; 37:20, 35; 38:20; 43:12; 45:17, 22; 49:25; 59:1, 16; 63:1, 5; 64:5 (cf. 63:9: “the angel of his presence” as subject); Jer 17:14; 23:6; 31:7; 33:16; Ezek 34:22; Hab 3:13; Zech 8:7; 9:9. Note the negative statements in Ps 33:16; 44:3, 7; Isa 45:20; 46:7; 47:13 (false gods and human strength cannot save).

<sup>51</sup> Ps 62:3, 7; Isa 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21–22; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8; Hos 13:4.

<sup>52</sup> Moises Silva, ed., *NIDNTTE*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 4:426. E.g. 1 Macc. 4:30; 3 Macc. 6:29, 32; 7:16; Wis 16:17; Sir 51:1; Pss. Sol. 17:3; Bar 4:22; Jdt 9:11.

<sup>53</sup> Note also “salvation” language associated with Jesus: (1.) ἡ σωτηρία: Luke 1:69, 71, 77;

uniquely exercises the divine prerogative of granting “forgiveness of sins” (13:38–39: ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν; cf. 5:31).<sup>54</sup> Indeed, he does so in a manner which transcends the God-given Mosaic economy in both efficacy and scope: the forgiveness he offers brings “justification” beyond that offered by the law of Moses (13:39: ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν οὐκ ἠδυνήθητε ἐν νόμῳ Μωϋσέως δικαιωθῆναι [...] πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων δικαιούται),<sup>55</sup> and is not for Israel only, but for “everyone who believes” (13:39: πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων; cf. 13:46–48 with Isa 49:6). Thus, Paul’s declaration of Jesus as “Saviour” is rooted in Israel’s Scriptures, but applies that title in an historically novel way, to ascribe to Jesus prerogatives normally reserved for God alone.

Finally, Paul’s reference, in the sequel to this speech (13:46–47), to Jesus as the “Lord” (κύριος) who “commanded” his Gentile mission further exhibits the same pattern of biblical foundation and historical novelty. C.K. Rowe has shown that the Gospel of Luke already applies the title κύριος to both the “Lord” God and the “Lord” Jesus in such a way that “the totality of the life of Jesus κύριος” appears “as the embodied revelation of κύριος ὁ θεός”.<sup>56</sup> In Luke 3:4–6 (with Isa 40:3–5) and 7:22, 27 (with Isa 26:19; 35:5; Mal 3:1), for example, the Gospel applies prophetic promises of the coming of the LORD God to the arrival of the Lord Jesus.<sup>57</sup> By the end of the Gospel Jesus is “worshipped” (προσκυνέω) with the devotion that belongs to “the Lord ... God” alone (Luke 24:52 with 4:7–8 citing Deut 6:13).<sup>58</sup> This exalted κύριος-Christology is then confirmed in Peter’s Pentecost speech at the beginning of Acts: Jesus has now been enthroned as “Lord” and “Christ” at God’s “right hand” (2:32–36 citing Ps 110:1); from this exalted position he has exercised the divine prerogative of pouring out the Holy Spirit (2:33 with 2:17–18 and Joel 3:1; cf. Luke 3:16–17),<sup>59</sup>

19:9; Acts 4:12; 13:26, 47; 16:17; (2.) σωτήριος: Luke 2:30; 3:6; Acts 28:28; (3.) σῶζω: Luke 6:9; 7:50; 8:12, 36, 48, 50; 9:24; 17:19; 18:42; 19:10; 23:35, 37, 39; Acts 2:21, 40, 47; 4:9, 12; 11:14; 15:11; 16:30–31.

<sup>54</sup> Note esp.: Exod 32:32; Num 30:5, 8, 12; Deut 29:20; Josh 24:9; 1 Kgs 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50; 2 Chr 6:21, 25, 27, 30, 39; 7:14; Neh 9:17; Ps 32:5; 85:3; Isa 40:2; Jer 31:34; 33:8; 36:3; Dan 9:19; Hos 1:6; Amos 7:2; Mic 7:19. See Daniel Johansson, “‘Who Can Forgive Sins but God Alone?’ Human and Angelic Agents, and Divine Forgiveness in Early Judaism,” *JSNT* 33 (2011): 351–74.

<sup>55</sup> In Acts 13:39 Paul’s reference to “being justified” (δικαιούται) by Jesus possibly alludes to the “servant’s” role in Isaiah 53:11 (עִבְדִּי / δίκαιῶσαι). If so, this strengthens the case that Paul’s earlier statement about the suffering of the Christ (13:27, 29) evokes Isaiah 53.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher K. Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke*, BZNW 139 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 218.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 62–4; Steve Walton, “Jesus, Present and/or Absent? The Presence and Presentation of Jesus as a Character in the Book of Acts,” in *Characters and Characterization in Luke-Acts*, ed. Frank Dicken and Julia A. Snyder, LNTS 548 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 123–40, here 137–8.

<sup>58</sup> προσκυνέω appears only in these two texts in Luke. Cf. Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 69.

<sup>59</sup> See: Douglas Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke’s Christology*, SNTSMS

and so to call on *Jesus's* "name" is to "call on the name of the Lord," that is, God (2:21 citing Joel 3:5: ἐπικαλέσεται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου; with 2:36, 38).<sup>60</sup> Peter subsequently affirms of Jesus that "he is Lord of all" (10:36: οὗτός ἐστιν πάντων κύριος).<sup>61</sup>

In this narrative context, Paul's repeated designation of Jesus as "Lord" suggests that he, too, recognizes Jesus as the one who embodies Israel's God.<sup>62</sup> Certainly, Jesus's appearance to Paul on the Damascus Road evokes the appearance of the LORD God at Sinai: he "appears" as "Lord" (9:5, 17: κύριος + ὅραω pass.), with a "flashing light from heaven" (9:3: περιήστραψεν φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), and an audible "voice" (9:4, 7: φωνή), to reveal his name – "I am Jesus" (9:5: Ἐγώ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς).<sup>63</sup> The Lord Jesus then commissions Paul, through Ananias, "to carry my name before the Gentiles" (9:15: τοῦ βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐνώπιον ἐθνῶν), and Paul begins to preach boldly "in the name of Jesus," that is, "in the name of the Lord" (9:27: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ; 9:28: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου). In this light, Paul's appeal, in Acts 13:47, to "the Lord" who "commanded" his Gentile mission naturally includes reference to the Lord Jesus.<sup>64</sup>

89 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 194–6; Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts*, JPTSUP 9 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 277–9.

<sup>60</sup> For "calling on the name of the LORD" (קרא + הנה' / ἐπικαλέω + τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου) in Israel's Scriptures: Gen 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; 1 Kgs 18:24; 2 Kgs 5:11; Ps 116:4, 13, 17; Joel 3:5; Zeph 3:9; cf. Ps 80:19; Isa 12:4; Zech 13:9. For "calling on the name" (ἐπικαλέω + τὸ ὄνομα) of the Lord Jesus in Acts: 9:14, 21; 22:16; cf. 7:59; 19:13. For the "name" of Jesus elsewhere in Acts: 2:21, 38; 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30; 5:28, 40–41; 8:12, 16; 9:14–16, 21, 27, 28; 10:43, 48; 15:26; 16:18; 19:5, 13, 17; 21:13; 22:16; 26:9. Cf. C.F.D. Moule, "The Christology of Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honour of Paul Schubert*, ed. Leander E. Keck and James L. Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 161; Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," VC 57:2 (2003): 115–58, here 146–8; idem, "The Divine Name as a Characteristic of Divine Identity in Second-Temple Judaism and Early Christianity," in Novenson, *Monotheism and Christology*, 62–84, here 79–80; Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 179–85, 197–206.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Steve Walton, "Identity and Christology: The Ascended Jesus in the Book of Acts," in *The Earliest Perceptions of Jesus in Context: Essays in Honour of John Nolland*, ed. Aaron W. White, David Wenham, and Craig A. Evans, LNTS 566 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 141: the κύριος-Christology of Peter's Pentecost speech places Jesus "in the same category as Israel's God".

<sup>62</sup> Paul refers to Jesus as κύριος at Acts 9:5, 28; 13:10–12, 47–48; 15:36; 16:31; 21:13; 22:8, 10, 19; 26:15. Cf. 9:17; 13:2, 44; 14:3, 23; 15:26, 35, 40; 16:14–15, 32; 18:8–9; 19:5, 10, 13, 17, 20; 21:14; 23:11; 28:31.

<sup>63</sup> See below § 5.2 for the echoes of Sinai and the biblical theophany tradition. For extended analysis of Acts 9, compare esp. Timothy W. R. Churchill, *Divine Initiative and the Christology of the Damascus Road Encounter* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 191–249.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Martin Rese, "Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen in den Reden der Apostelgeschichte," in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, ed. Jacob Kremer, BETL 48 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979), 77–79; Gert J. Steyn, *Septuagint Quotations in the Context of the Petrine and Pauline Speeches of the Acta Apostolorum*, CBET 12 (Kampen: Pharos, 1995), 197; David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*,

Significantly, Paul immediately identifies this command with the LORD God's prophetic word through Isaiah (13:47 citing Isa 49:6). The result is that Paul – consistent with Luke-Acts elsewhere – identifies Jesus with the LORD who spoke through Isaiah.<sup>65</sup> The Lord Jesus's commissioning of Paul's Gentile mission appears as the eschatological confirmation of what the same "Lord" spoke beforehand, through the prophet.

Paul's Christology in his synagogue exhortation in Pisidian Antioch lays the groundwork for the other speeches in Acts: it is thoroughly Jewish, being rooted in the Scriptures and focussed on Jesus's identity as the Davidic Messiah; it is also historically novel, affirming that Messiah Jesus suffered God's curse, was raised from the dead ahead of the rest, and is now declared "Son of God," "Saviour," and "Lord" in the most exalted sense.

### 3. The Judge of the Nations: The Christology of Paul's Athens Address (Acts 17:22–31)

Paul's address to the Areopagus in Acts 17:22–31 is the most extended presentation in Acts of his proclamation of Jesus in a Gentile context, and presents Jesus as the Judge of the nations.<sup>66</sup>

This speech is, again, deeply rooted in Israel's Scriptures. The major emphasis of the first part of the speech (17:22–29) is the supremacy of God as the creator, ruler, and sustainer of all that exists: he is "the God who made the world (ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον) and everything in it (καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ) [...] the Lord of heaven and earth (οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος) [...] [who] gives to everyone (δίδους πᾶσιν) life and breath and everything" (ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα) (17:24–25; cf. 14:15–17). Paul's here asserts a radical distinction between the sole creator and his creation: he is the sole source of all reality outside of himself, and the only sovereign over all that exists. These formulations, of course, reflect the common biblical teaching that the LORD alone, Israel's God, is the one, true,

WUNT 2/130 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 101. *Contra* Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 414, n. 5; Bart J. Koet, *Five Studies on Interpretation of Scripture in Luke-Acts*, SNTA 14 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 113.

<sup>65</sup> In Acts 26:23, Paul also identifies "Messiah" Jesus as the LORD's "servant" of Isaiah 49:6 and 42:6 (cf. Luke 2:23), and so characterizes Paul's Gentile mission as an extension of Jesus's mission as the "servant of the LORD". Paul thus recognizes Jesus as *both* the LORD who sends, *and* the servant who is sent. The same juxtaposition is evident in Luke 3:4–6 (citing Isaiah 40:3–5 and identifying Jesus as the coming LORD) and 3:22 (alluding to Isaiah 42:1 and identifying Jesus as the Isaianic "servant").

<sup>66</sup> For a review of scholarship on the Areopagus speech, see Claire K. Rothschild, *Paul in Athens: The Popular Religious Context of Acts 17*, WUNT 341 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 157–60.



and living God,<sup>67</sup> the sole creator of heaven and earth,<sup>68</sup> who has no equal,<sup>69</sup> and brooks no rivals.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the Scriptures affirm that he is “the only God,”<sup>71</sup> that there is “none like him,”<sup>72</sup> that beside him “there is no other,”<sup>73</sup> and that before him the “gods” of the nations are “worthless idols,”<sup>74</sup> and “no gods at all.”<sup>75</sup> While the biblical and early Jewish texts recognize the existence of other heavenly beings, and even sometimes designate them “gods” (אֱלֹהִים / θεοί), they nevertheless maintain a fundamental ontological distinction between the creator God and his creatures, over whom he exercises sovereign rule, and from whom he requires exclusive worship.<sup>76</sup> Paul certainly echoes these affirmations in his letters, declaring that Israel’s God is the “only God” (μόνος θεός), “the living and true God,”<sup>77</sup> and Paul’s formulations in Acts 17:22–29 affirm the same.

It is, therefore, significant that in this same speech, Paul applies to Jesus biblical texts which, in their original contexts, refer to the one true God of Israel, and so includes Jesus within the identity of God himself.<sup>78</sup> Paul does not mention Jesus by name, but the introduction indicates that his preaching at the Areopagus concerns “Jesus and the resurrection” (17:18: τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν), and “the man whom he [God] has appointed” is clearly Jesus (17:31).<sup>79</sup> Crucially, Paul’s affirmation that God “has fixed a day [ἔστησεν ἡμέραν] on which he will judge the world in righteousness [ἐν ᾗ μέλλει κρίνειν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ]” (17:31) echoes a series of biblical texts which affirm God’s righteous final judgment. The reference to a fixed eschatological

<sup>67</sup> Deut 6:4–5; Jer 10:10.

<sup>68</sup> Gen 1:1; Exod 19:5; Neh 9:6; Ps 24:1–2; 96:5; 103:19; 148:1–5; Isa 37:16; 40:28; 44:24; 54:5; Jer 10:11.

<sup>69</sup> Exod 8:10; 15:11; Deut 3:24; 33:26; 1 Sam 2:2; 1 Kgs 8:23; 22:19; 2 Chr 6:14; Ps 29:1; 71:19; 95:3; 97:9; 113:5; Isa 40:18; 46:5; 9; Jer 10:6–7, 16; Dan 4:35.

<sup>70</sup> Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7.

<sup>71</sup> Ps 86:10; Isa 37:20.

<sup>72</sup> Exod 8:10; 15:11; Deut 3:24; 33:26; Jer 10:16; 1 Sam 2:2; 1 Kgs 8:23.

<sup>73</sup> Deut 4:35, 39; 32:39; 1 Sam 2:2; 1 Kgs 18:39; 86:10; Isa 37:16, 20; 43:10; 44:6, 8; 45:5, 14, 18, 21–22; 46:9; Joel 2:27.

<sup>74</sup> 1 Chr 16:26; Ps 31:7; 96:5; 115:2–8; 135:5, 15–18; Isa 2:6–21; 37:19; 41:22–24; 42:8, 17; 44:6–20; 45:14–25; Jer 2:11, 28.

<sup>75</sup> Jer 2:11; 16:20; cf. Deut 32:17.

<sup>76</sup> See esp. Richard J. Bauckham, “The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus,” in *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 152–81. Cf. Michael S. Heiser, “Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible,” *BBR* 18:1 (2008): 1–30, here 4–13; idem, “Monotheism and the Language of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *TynB* 65:1 (2014): 85–100. *Contra* Fredriksen, “How High?,” 295–303.

<sup>77</sup> Rom 3:30; 16:27; 1 Cor 8:4–6; Eph 4:6; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 1:17; 2:5.

<sup>78</sup> For this phenomenon in Paul’s letters, see esp. David B. Capes, “Jesus’ Unique Relationship with Yhwh in Biblical Exegesis: A Response to Recent Objections,” in Novenson, *Monotheism and Christology*, 85–98.

<sup>79</sup> D it<sup>ar</sup>, d Irenaeus<sup>lat</sup> read ἀνδρὶ Ἰησοῦ, but most mss lack explicit reference to Jesus, and this is also the *lectio difficilior*.

“day” evokes the biblical “day of the LORD” tradition,<sup>80</sup> especially those texts in which the “day of the LORD” (יהוה יום / ἡμέρα κυρίου) is associated with final, universal, judgment.<sup>81</sup> More specifically, Paul’s affirmation reflects a series of texts in the Psalms, which declare that God “will judge the world in righteousness” (Ps 9:9; 96:13; 98:9: קִרְיֵי תִּבְרֵיטִי / κρίνει τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ). Across the Scriptures, righteous judgment is an exclusively divine prerogative,<sup>82</sup> and the LORD’s judgment on the “day of the LORD” is often associated with the “coming of God” himself.<sup>83</sup> This is certainly the case in the psalms Paul evokes, which call on creation to rejoice “before the LORD” (יהוה לפני / πρὸ προσώπου κυρίου), because “he comes to judge the earth” (96:13; 98:9: בָּא לִפְנֵי / ἔρχεται κρίναι τὴν γῆν / ἥκει κρίναι τὴν γῆν). Thus, Paul’s declaration is thoroughly Jewish – it repeats the biblical affirmation that God will come to judge.

The striking new emphasis in Paul’s declaration is that *God* will judge the world “by a man whom he has appointed” (17:31: ἐν ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὥρισεν).<sup>84</sup> This affirmation has no direct precedent in Israel’s Scriptures, but is neither without biblical foundation, nor lacking in early Jewish parallels. His affirmation is conceptually similar to Ps 110:1–7 and Dan 7:13–14, both of which present visions of an eschatological human figure – a “Lord” or “son of man” – who participates in, and even embodies, the final coming of God to judge. The parallel to Psalm 110 has not been widely recognized, but Ps 110:1 is prominently associated with Jesus’s resurrection and exaltation in the narrative of Luke-Acts,<sup>85</sup> and may stand behind Paul’s reference to Jesus being “appointed” (ὀρίζω) as “judge” (Acts 17:31; cf. 10:42; Rom 1:4; 8:34). Certainly, Paul’s declaration parallels the psalm’s eschatological vision: God will “execute judgment” (Acts 17:31; cf. Ps 110:6: דִּין / κρίνω), over “the world” (Acts 17:31: οἰκουμένη; cf. Ps 110:6: גוֹיִם + עַרְצֵי / ἔθνοι + γῆ), on the eschatological “day” (Acts 17:31; cf. Ps 110:3, 5: יום / ἡμέρα), through his chosen human agent (Acts 17:31: ἀνὴρ; cf. Ps 110:1: נָבִיא / κύριος).<sup>86</sup> Similarly, Paul’s declaration parallels Dan 7:13–14 with its vision of a

<sup>80</sup> The precise phrase יהוה יום occurs sixteen times in fourteen texts: Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18 [x2], 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14 [x2]; Mal 4:5. The motif of a “day” of the LORD’s powerful action appears in a range of other closely related descriptions: Isa 2:12; 3:13; 34:8; 61:2; Jer 46:10; Lam 1:12; 2:22; Ezek 7:19; 30:2–3; Joel 2:2; Mic 7:4; Zeph 1:18; 2:2–3; Zech 14:1, 7; Mal 3:2, 17; 4:1, 3. A number of other phrases are also relevant, including “on that day” and “in those days.” For a brief survey, see Joel D. Barker, “Day of the LORD,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 132–43.

<sup>81</sup> E.g. Isa 2:11–12; 61:2; Joel 3:4; 4:14; Mal 3:23; Zeph 1:7, 14, 17–18; Zech 14.4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 20, 21.

<sup>82</sup> E.g. Gen 18:25; Judg 11:27; 1 Sam 2:10; Ps 67:5; 82:8; 94:2; 96:10; Isa 33:22.

<sup>83</sup> E.g. Isa 2:5–22; Joel 4:14–21; Zech 14:1–9.

<sup>84</sup> The prepositional phrase ἐν ἀνδρὶ is instrumental: “by / through a man.”

<sup>85</sup> Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33–34; 3:20–21; 5:31; 7:55–56.

<sup>86</sup> The Lord God – אֱלֹהִים (\*dōnāy) not אֲדֹנָי (\*dōnī) – is the grammatical subject at the beginning of verse 5, and there is no clear grammatical indication that the subject changes at any point before the end of the psalm. See Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A*



human figure – the “one like a son of man” (שֶׁנֶלֶךְ בֶּרֶךְ / ὅς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) – who embodies the final coming of God.<sup>87</sup> Daniel’s vision is also prominent in the wider narrative of Luke-Acts, being especially associated with Jesus’s eschatological return.<sup>88</sup> Although Daniel’s “son of man” is never explicitly said to “judge,” he comes “with the clouds of heaven,” as only God does (Dan 7:13: אֲנִי עֵשְׂרֵן / OG: ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ / Θ: μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ),<sup>89</sup> receives universal “worship,” as only God should (Dan 7:14, 27: פֶּלַח / OG: λατρεύω / Θ: δουλεύω),<sup>90</sup> and is entrusted with the universal and everlasting “dominion” that properly belongs to God alone (Dan 7:14: מְלָכּוּת / ἐξουσία).<sup>91</sup> He thus comes *as* God, and is co-enthroned *with* “the Ancient of Days,” which suggests that he might play a role in the final judgment. Certainly, several early Jewish texts – especially 1 En. 37–71 and 4 Ezra 13 – develop Daniel’s vision in this direction, and depict a human figure executing the final judgment on earth.<sup>92</sup> Still, Paul’s declaration in the Areopagus speech is unprecedented in one important respect: it affirms that the identity of this “man appointed by God” has been revealed ahead of time; the once-crucified Jesus will be the judge on the final day.<sup>93</sup>

Paul appeals to Jesus’s resurrection as the “proof” that God has appointed him as judge: God “has given assurance to all (πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν) by raising him from the dead (ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν)” (17:31). Paul does not here

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*Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 143–44. Note, similarly, Ps 2:7–12, which lacks explicit reference to “judgment.”

<sup>87</sup> The allusion to Dan 7:13–14 is recognized, but not developed, by: Bruce, *Acts*, 341; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 570; David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 503. For Dan 7 as a vision of the “coming of God,” see esp. George R. Beasley-Murray, “The Interpretation of Daniel 7,” *CBQ* 45:1 (1983): 44–58.

<sup>88</sup> Luke 9:26; 12:40; 17:24, 30; 18:8; 21:27, 36; 22:28–30; Acts 1:9–11.

<sup>89</sup> E.g. Exod 19:9; 33:9; 34:5; Num 11:25; 12:5; 2 Sam 22:10; Ps 18:10; Isa 30:30; Ezek 1:4; Nah 1:3. Cf. Markus Zehnder, “Why the Danielic ‘Son of Man’ is a Divine Being,” *BBR* 24:3 (2014): 331–47, here 337–40. The Old Greek Translation makes this coming *as* God explicit (Dan 7:13 OG: ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν). See Benjamin E. Reynolds, “The ‘One Like a Son of Man’ According to the Old Greek of Daniel 7.13–14,” *Bib* 89 (2008): 70–80.

<sup>90</sup> Dan 3:12, 14, 17, 18, 28; 6:17, 21; 7:14, 27. Cf. Zehnder, “Divine Being,” 340.

<sup>91</sup> Dan 2:44; 3:33; 4:31; 6:26. Cf. Zehnder, “Divine Being,” 340–1.

<sup>92</sup> 1 En. 45:2–5; 46:4–5; 51:3; 55:4; 61:8; 62:2–12; 69:27 B and C, 29; 4 Ezra 13:1–13; cf. 12:32–34; 13:37–38. Note also Testament of Abraham A 13:2–3, which depicts “the Son of Adam, the first formed,” that is “Abel,” “seated on the throne [...] to judge the entire creation.” Indeed, Acts 17 and the Testament of Abraham also both affirm: (1.) the organic unity of the human race descended from Adam (T. Abr. A 13:5; Acts 17:26), and; (2.) the fittingness of judgment by a “son” of Adam (T. Abr. A 13:5; Acts 17:31). The parallel is, however, only partial, since the judgment executed by Abel is not the final judgment, which remains the prerogative of God alone (T. Abr. A 13:5–14). Cf. E. P. Sanders, “Testament of Abraham,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 1 – Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 878.

<sup>93</sup> This teaching is anticipated by Jesus in the Gospels (esp. Matt 13:41; 16:27; 19:28; 25:31–46; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 22:28–30; John 5:22, 27), and by Peter earlier in Acts (10:42).

elaborate on how the resurrection provides this assurance that Jesus will judge, but statements elsewhere in Acts supply a two-fold logic. First, Jesus's resurrection indicates that God has "set the day" (ἔστησεν ἡμέραν) for the judgment (17:31): since Jesus was "the first to rise from the dead" (26:23: πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν; cf. 4:2), his resurrection has inaugurated the general resurrection;<sup>94</sup> since that general resurrection will involve "both the just and the unjust" (24:15: δίκαιων τε καὶ ἀδίκων; cf. Dan 12:2), it will be a resurrection to judgment.<sup>95</sup> Second, Jesus's resurrection indicates that Jesus himself has been "appointed" (ὥρισεν) as judge of the final day (17:31): since Jesus's resurrection and ascension constitute his enthronement at God's "right hand" as "Lord and Christ" (2:32–36), "Leader and Saviour" (5:31), and "Son of Man" (7:55–56),<sup>96</sup> they also indicate his "appointment" (ὀρίζω) as judge (Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom 1:4).<sup>97</sup> This twofold understanding finds clear parallels in Paul's letters, where Jesus's resurrection and ascension provide the ground for his "appointment" (ὀρίζω) as "Son of God in power" (Rom 1:4), at the "right hand of God" (Rom 8:34; cf. 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1), which supports the conclusion that God will judge people's secrets "through Christ Jesus (διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ)" (Rom 2:16). Accordingly Paul, in his letters, regularly speaks of the fixed eschatological "day" (ἡμέρα) of judgment, and interprets this in Christo-centric terms as "the day of Christ Jesus."<sup>98</sup> The remarkable Christological conclusion – for Paul in Acts no less than Paul in his letters – is that *Jesus* will embody the final coming of God to execute the judgment; every knee will bow before *his* throne; every person will receive just recompense from *his* hand (17:31; cf. Rom 14:10–12; Phil 2:10–11; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1).

Paul's Areopagus speech thus confirms and extends the Christology in the earlier synagogue address. In this Gentile context, Paul draws on the fundamental biblical distinction between God and creation, and characterizes Jesus as the eschatological "Lord-son of man," who will embody the final coming of God, and execute God's judgment on the final day.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Rom 1:4; 8:11, 29; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; 15:20–23; Col 1:18; 1 Thess 4:14–16.

<sup>95</sup> For resurrection associated with final judgment, see: John 5:28–29; Acts 10:42; 1 Thess 1:10; Heb 6:2.

<sup>96</sup> The Son of Man "standing" (contrast Luke 22:69 "sitting") likely indicates his forensic function: he stands as Stephen's advocate, ready to judge. For surveys of the major interpretations, with arguments for this view, see: Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*, JSNTSup 12 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 222–4; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1440–3.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 307; Peter J. Scaer, "Resurrection as Justification in the Book of Acts," *CTQ* 70:3–4 (2006): 219–31, here 224.

<sup>98</sup> Rom 2:5, 16; 13:12; 1 Cor 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess 5:2, 4, 5, 8; 2 Thess 1:10; 2:2; 2 Tim 1:12, 18; 4:8.

#### 4. The Lord of His Church: The Christology of Paul's Ephesian Exhortation (Acts 20:17–35)

Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders gathered at Miletus (20:17–35) further draws on the language and categories of Israel's Scriptures – reworked in light of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection – to present Jesus as the “Lord” of his church (20:19, 21, 24, 35: κύριος).

As we have seen (above § 2), within the narrative of Luke-Acts, Paul's repeated designation of Jesus as κύριος already implies that he mediates and embodies God's lordship in the world. Three further features of Paul's characterization of Jesus in this speech confirm this identity. First, Paul co-ordinates “repentance towards God” (τὴν εἰς θεὸν μετάνοιαν) with “faith in our Lord Jesus” (πίστιν εἰς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν) in a manner that closely aligns Jesus with God (20:21). While the Scriptures commonly call for repentance towards God,<sup>99</sup> and God (θεός) is also the one towards whom people repent throughout Luke-Acts,<sup>100</sup> several texts call for repentance towards the “Lord” (κύριος), in terms which probably include reference to the Lord Jesus (8:22; 9:35; 11:21).<sup>101</sup> Similarly, while the Scriptures typically call for faith in the LORD God, or in his servants, or his words,<sup>102</sup> in Luke-Acts, the general call for faith in God or his word,<sup>103</sup> is sharply focussed on faith in the Lord *Jesus* and *his* word, or the gospel concerning *him*.<sup>104</sup> In this context, Paul presents “repentance towards God” and “faith in our Lord Jesus” as distinct but inseparable responses to God-in-Christ, and so implies that God and Christ are themselves distinct but inseparable (20:21).

Second, Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders – to “care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (20:28: ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου) – most likely characterizes Jesus *as* God.<sup>105</sup> It is possible that the crucial phrase – διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου – does not mean “with his own blood” [= God's blood], but “with the blood of his

<sup>99</sup> “Turn” or “return” to God (שוב / ἐπιστρέφω): Deut 4:30; 30:2; 1 Kgs 8:33, 48; 2 Kgs 23:25; 2 Chr 6:24; 30:9; Neh 1:9; Job 22:23; Prov 1:23 [LXX alters the sense]; Isa 6:10; 9:13 [LXX: ἀποστρέφω]; 44:22; 55:7; Jer 3:7 [LXX: ἀναστρέφω], 12, 14, 22; 18:8; 24:7; Lam 3:40; 5:21; Hos 14:1; Joel 2:12–13; Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11; Zech 1:3. Cf. 2 Cor 3:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Pet 2:25.

<sup>100</sup> Acts 14:15; 15:19; 26:18, 20; 28:27. In several other texts, God is the implied object of “turning back” (ἐπιστρέφω) or “repenting” (μετάνοια / μετανοέω): Luke 3:3, 8; 5:32; 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; 16:30; 24:47; 22:32; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4.

<sup>101</sup> Certainly, Peter explicitly declares that it is the risen and exalted Lord Jesus who performs the divine function of “giv[ing] repentance to Israel” (5:31; cf. Luke 24:47). For repentance as a divine gift, see: Deut 30:6; 1 Kgs 18:37–39; 2 Chr 30:12 [with 30:9]; Ps 23:3; Lam 5:21.

<sup>102</sup> E.g. Gen 15:6; Exod 4:31; 14:31; Ps 106:12; 119:66; Jon 3:5.

<sup>103</sup> Luke 1:20, 45; 24:25; Acts 16:34; 24:14; 26:27; 27:25; cf. Luke 16:31; 17:5–6.

<sup>104</sup> Luke 5:20; 7:9, 50; 8:12–13, 25, 48, 50; 17:19; 18:8, 42; 22:67; Acts 2:44; 3:16; 4:4; 5:14; 8:12; 9:42; 10:43; 11:17, 21; 13:39, 48; 14:23; 15:7, 11; 16:31; 18:8; 19:4; 22:19; 24:24; 26:18; cf. Luke 16:31.

<sup>105</sup> The mss are divided between those which read “the church of God” (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ), and those which read “the church of the Lord” (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ κυρίου). Although it

own" [= God's Son, Jesus].<sup>106</sup> This reading takes ὁ ἰδιος as a kind of Christological title. Its strengths are that (1.) it avoids the unusual notion that God has blood; (2.) it is supported by the common use of ὁ ἰδιος in the papyri as "a term of endearment referring to near relatives,"<sup>107</sup> and (3.) it finds a partial parallel in Paul's reference to Jesus as "his [God's] own son" (Rom 8:32: τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ; cf. Diogn. 9:2: τὸν ἰδιον υἱόν). The more natural reading of the Greek, however, is that Paul identifies Jesus as *God* (ὁ θεός), affirming that *God* obtained the church with "*his own blood*" (cf. Heb 9:12).<sup>108</sup> Although Acts does not elsewhere explicitly apply the noun θεός to Jesus, the narrative – as we have noted – includes Jesus within the identity of the LORD God of Israel,<sup>109</sup> and the designation of Jesus as "God" (θεός) certainly finds parallels in Paul's letters (Rom 9:5; Tit 2:13–14).<sup>110</sup> Further, while the idea of God's "blood" is foreign to Israel's Scriptures and early Judaism,<sup>111</sup> and also unusual in early Christian literature, Ignatius and Tertullian do refer to "God's blood" in reference God's redemptive work in Christ (Ign. *Eph.* 1:1: ἐν αἵματι θεοῦ; Tertullian, *Ux.* 2.3.1: *sanguine dei*). Christian theology can account for the striking phrase by reading it as shorthand for how "God," in the person of his Son, through his human nature, shed "his own blood."<sup>112</sup> Thus, while it is possible that Paul refers here to Jesus as God's "own [Son]," he more probably speaks of Jesus as *God*.

Third, Paul's affirmation that God "obtained" (περιεποιήσατο) "the church" for himself further confirms this reading (20:28).<sup>113</sup> The affirmation probably

is difficult to be certain, the former reading is more likely. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 425–7.

<sup>106</sup> Bruce, *Acts*, 416, n. 59; Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 139–41; Steve Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians*, SNTSMS 108 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 91, 94–9; Larry W. Hurtado, "Christology in Acts: Jesus in Early Christian Belief and Practice," in *Issues in Luke-Acts: Selected Essays*, ed. Sean A. Adams and Michael W. Pahl, Gorgias Handbooks 26 (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2013), 22 n. 17.

<sup>107</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 426 citing James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek. Vol. 1, Prolegomena*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 90; idem and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), s.v.

<sup>108</sup> So: Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 680; Keener, *Acts*, 3:3039. Note that, unlike Rom 8:32, Acts 20:28 lacks reference to God's "son" (υἱός).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Peter's similarly paradoxical statement, "you killed the Author of Life" (Acts 3:15).

<sup>110</sup> See esp. Harris, *Jesus as God*, 143–72 [on Rom 9:5]; 173–85 [on Tit 2:13–14]. Cf. George Carraway, *Christ is God Over All: Romans 9:5 in the Context of Romans 9–11*, LNTS 489 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). Possibly also: 2 Thess 1:12.

<sup>111</sup> E.g. Exod 20:4; 33:20; Deut 4:12, 15–16; 1 Kgs 8:27; Jer 23:23–24; Ezek 1:28; Mal 3:6.

<sup>112</sup> See *Westminster Confession of Faith* §8.7 citing Acts 20:28. Cf. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Vol. 3 – Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), §371 (p. 308).

<sup>113</sup> The phrase ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ is unique to Paul in the New Testament (1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13. Cf. pl.: 1 Cor 11:16; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:4). It evokes

alludes to the LORD's declaration, through Isaiah, that he is doing "a new thing" in bringing about a "new Exodus," "obtaining" a people for himself (Isa 43:21 LXX: λαὸν μου, ὃν περιποιησάμην; cf. Ps 74:2).<sup>114</sup> In the narrative of Luke-Acts, this new Exodus theme is especially connected with Jesus's reference to "the new covenant *in my blood*" (Luke 22:20: ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου; cf. Exod 24:8; Jer 31:31; 32:40; Zech 9:11).<sup>115</sup> In this context, Paul's affirmation that *God* has "obtained" a people for himself, with "his own blood" – that is, the blood of *Jesus* – again serves to identify Jesus as God.

Paul's Christology in the Miletus speech thus again has deep roots in Israel's Scriptures and is, in that sense, thoroughly Jewish. At the same time, Paul develops these biblical themes in striking ways, declaring that Jesus himself is "Lord" and the proper object of "faith," that Jesus's blood is – in some sense – God's "own blood," and that by this blood God has obtained a people for himself in a remarkable "new Exodus."

## 5. The Presence of God: The Christology of Paul's Defence Speeches (Acts 22:1–21; 24:10–21; 26:2–29)

Paul's three defence speeches in the latter part of Acts – before the crowds in Jerusalem (22:1–21), before Felix (24:10–21), and before Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice (26:2–29) – exhibit common Christological emphases, and may be examined together. According to Paul in these speeches, Jesus is both "the Righteous One," whose resurrection effects the resurrection of all, and the highly exalted one, whose appearances to Paul embody the presence of the LORD God himself.

### 5.1 *The Resurrected Righteous One*

Paul first draws on biblical language to characterize Jesus as "the Righteous One" (22:14: τὸν δίκαιον).<sup>116</sup> This designation finds broad antecedent in the fre-

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the biblical characterization of Israel, from the Exodus and Sinai onwards, as "the assembly of the LORD" (Deut 23:3–4, 9; 1 Chr 28:8; Mic 2:5 LXX: ἐκκλησία κυρίου) or "the assembly of God" (Neh 13:1 LXX: ἐκκλησία θεοῦ; cf. Judg 20:2).

<sup>114</sup> The verb περιποιέω, in combination with "blood" (αἷμα), carries the sense of redemption by sacrifice (cf. Rom 3:24–25; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14, 20; 1 Pet 1:2, 18–19). The cognate noun περιποίησις is used in Exodus / new Exodus contexts, reflecting the understanding of God's people as his "treasured possession." See: Mal 3:17 LXX; Eph 1:14; 1 Pet 2:9. Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 3:3038.

<sup>115</sup> The echoes of the Exodus are further underlined by Paul's reference to "the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32: τὴν κληρονομίαν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πασιν; cf. 26:18 with Deut 33:3–4; Wis 5:5).

<sup>116</sup> "Righteous One" is used as title or descriptor for pagan rulers, but Acts uses it only in Jerusalem speeches (3:14; 7:52; 22:14). Ananias's references to "brother Saul" (Σαοὺλ ἀδελφῆ),

quent references to “the righteous” in the psalms (קִי־צָ; often δίκαιος or ὁ δίκαιος),<sup>117</sup> and especially in the prophets’ application of the adjective קִי־צָ / δίκαιος (“righteous”) and the noun קִי־צָ / δίκαιοσύνη (“righteousness”) to promised eschatological figures.<sup>118</sup> “The Righteous One” appears as something of a title for such a figure in both Isa 53:11 (קִי־צָ / δίκαιον),<sup>119</sup> and Hab 2:4b (קִי־צָ / ὁ δίκαιος).<sup>120</sup> Among the early Jewish texts, the Parables of Enoch apply the title “the Righteous One” to the highly exalted eschatological figure also identified as “the Son of Man,” “the Elect One,” and “the Messiah.”<sup>121</sup> Other early Jewish texts employ the designation in similar ways.<sup>122</sup> Among the early Christian texts, Jesus’s identity as “the Righteous One” is especially prominent in Luke-Acts (Acts 3:14: τὸν ἅγιον καὶ δίκαιον; 7:52: τοῦ δικαίου; cf. Luke 23:47: δίκαιος),<sup>123</sup> and in Paul’s letters (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11: ὁ δίκαιος; cf. Hab 2:4b),<sup>124</sup> but also appears elsewhere (1 Pet 3:18; 1 John 2:1; Justin, *Dial.* 16.4; possibly Heb 10:38; Jas

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and “the God of our fathers (Ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν) confirm this Jewish context (Acts 22:14). Cf. Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 126–7; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1091.

<sup>117</sup> Ps 5:13; 7:10; 11:3, 5; 14:5; 31:18; 34:20, 22; 37:12, 16, 21, 25, 30, 32; 55:23; 58:11–12; 64:11; 72:7; 75:11; 92:13; 94:21; 97:11; 112:6. Cf. similar use in Wis 2:12–20; 4:10–20.

<sup>118</sup> Isa 11:4–5; 53:11; Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16; Hab 2:4b; Zech 9:9.

<sup>119</sup> Some omit קִי־צָ on the ground of supposed dittography of the verb קִי־צָ (Anthony Gelston, “Some Notes on Second Isaiah,” *VT* 21 (1971): 517–27), or a judgment that it “overburdens the verse” (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 19A (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 346). Against this, see John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 399 n. 45: “the word is represented in all the versions.”

<sup>120</sup> The masculine singular קִי־צָ could be generic (NIV: “the righteous person”) or monadic, referring to a particular individual. The LXX translates with the article as ὁ δίκαιος (“the righteous one”) and so provides a “messianic” reading. See: Desta Heliso, *Pistis and the Righteous One: A Study of Romans 1:17 against the Background of Scripture and Second Temple Jewish Literature*, WUNT 2/235 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 40–53.

<sup>121</sup> 1 En. 38:2–3; 53:6; cf. 46:3; also possibly 91:10; 92:3–4. See esp.: James C. VanderKam, “Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37–71,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 169–91; George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 113–23.

<sup>122</sup> Pss. Sol. 17:23–51 esp. 32; 18:7–8; 4Q161 frg. 8 X, 16; 4Q252 V, 3. Note, also, the common description of Enoch and Noah as “righteous”: T. Lev. 10:5; T. Jud. 18:1; 24:5–6; T. Dan. 5:6; T. Ben. 9:1; 1 En. 1:2; 2 En. 1a:1 rec. A; 4 Bar. 7:8–9.

<sup>123</sup> On Acts 7:52, see Gerbern S. Oegema, “‘The Coming of the Righteous One’ in Acts and 1 Enoch,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 250–9.

<sup>124</sup> See esp.: Heliso, *Pistis*, 122–64. Cf. Stephen L. Young, “Romans 1.1–5 and Paul’s Christological Use of Hab. 2.4 in Rom. 1.17: An Underutilized Consideration in the Debate,” *JSN T* 34 (2012): 277–85; Joshua W. Jipp, *Christ is King: Paul’s Royal Ideology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 253–7.



5:6).<sup>125</sup> In this broad context, Paul's characterization of Jesus as "the Righteous One" (Acts 22:14) identifies him as the promised eschatological deliverer.

More specifically, Paul's designation probably identifies Jesus as "the Righteous One, my Servant" of Isa 53:11 (יְדִיִּי עַבְדִּי), who is vindicated and exalted after his suffering (Isa 52:13; 53:10b, 12a). Earlier in the narrative of Luke-Acts, Peter's declaration of Jesus as "the Righteous One" draws on Isa 53:11, and connects this to Jesus's resurrection (Acts 3:13–15).<sup>126</sup> Paul's affirmation in Acts 22:14 evokes that earlier text,<sup>127</sup> and – in the wider context of the defence speeches – has similar connections with Isaiah's "servant" passages (26:18 with Isa 42:7, 16; 61:1 LXX; 26:23 with Isa 42:6 and 49:6), and with "the resurrection" as the common "hope of Israel" (23:6; 24:14–15, 21; 26:6–8, 22–23; cf. 28:20: ἡ ἐλπίς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ). Significantly, in Acts 26:22–23 Paul draws on Isa 42:6 and 49:6 when he declares that "the Christ [...] by being the first to rise from the dead (πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν) [...] would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles" (φῶς μέλλει καταγγέλλειν τῷ τε λαῷ καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). Since these Isaianic texts present the "servant" as "a covenant for the people, a light for the nations" (Isa 42:6: גִּוִּים יְאֻרֶיךָ עַד יְרֵיכָה / εἰς διαθήκην γένους, εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν; Isa 49:6: גִּוִּים יְאֻרֶיךָ / εἰς διαθήκην γένους εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν), Paul is able to draw on them to affirm a covenant union between "the righteous servant" – Jesus – and those whom he represents such that his resurrection will effect theirs (26:23). Moreover, this recognition of Jesus as "the Righteous One," who will "make many to be accounted righteous" (קִיָּץ / δικαιῶσαι) (Isa 53:11), also provides the basis for Paul's declaration that Jesus's resurrection secures the justification of those who belong to him (cf. Acts 13:38–39; Rom 4:25).<sup>128</sup>

In addition to all of this, Paul's recognition of Jesus as "the Righteous One" may also hint at his divine identity (22:14; cf. 3:14: τὸν ἅγιον καὶ δίκαιον).<sup>129</sup> Certainly, God is regularly described as "righteous" (קִיָּץ / δίκαιος) in Scripture,<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup> For Hebrews 10:38, see Heliso, *Pistis*, 61–68. For James 5:6, see Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, SBT 17 (London: SCM, 1970), 47.

<sup>126</sup> See: Morris, *Cross*, 141; David P. Moessner, "The 'Script' of the Scriptures in Acts: Suffering as God's 'Plan' (βουλή) for the World for the 'Release of Sins,'" in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 228; Keener, *Acts*, 2: 1092.

<sup>127</sup> Note: (1). "the God of our fathers" (ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν) (3:13; 22:14); (2). "the Righteous One" (τὸν δίκαιον) (3:14; 22:14).

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Scaer, "Resurrection," 219–31; Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Justification in Luke-Acts," in *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, ed. Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 106–25. For the similar conception in Romans 4:25, see: idem, *Resurrection*, 99–125; Michael F. Bird, "Justified by Christ's Resurrection: A Neglected Aspect of Paul's Doctrine of Justification," *SBET* 22:1 (2004): 72–91.

<sup>129</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 2: 1091.

<sup>130</sup> Note esp. Isa 24:16 which refers to God as "the Righteous One" (צַדִּיק). Cf. Deut 32:4; 2 Chr 12:6; Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:8, 33; Ps 11:7; 116:5; 145:17; Isa 45:21; Lam 1:18; Dan 9:14; Zeph 3:5; Zech 9:9.

and in early Jewish texts,<sup>131</sup> and in the Parables of Enoch, “the Righteous One” appears as a highly exalted, pre-existent figure (1 En. 46:1–2; 48:2–3, 6; 62:7; cf. 39:6–7), who bears the divine name (1 En. 48:2–3),<sup>132</sup> and – as we noted already – embodies the final coming of God (§2). Thus, while Paul’s use of “the Righteous One” as a title for Jesus primarily evokes the Isaianic servant, in the context of the highly exalted Christology we have sketched so far, a further hint of Jesus’s divine identity cannot be ruled out.

## 5.2 *Christo-theophany*

Above and beyond this recognition of Jesus as “the Righteous One,” Paul characterizes his visions of Jesus on the Damascus Road (22:6–11; 26:12–18), and in the Jerusalem temple (22:17–21), as nothing less than visions of God himself. While the accounts have some parallels with Greco-Roman-style epiphanies,<sup>133</sup> the most important connections are with the biblical accounts of the great theophany at Sinai (esp. Exod 3–4; 19–24, 33–34; Deut 4–5), and the wider biblical theophany tradition.<sup>134</sup> Paul establishes this connection through four basic echoes of the Sinai theophany, and eight further allusions to subsequent biblical theophany texts.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>131</sup> E.g. 4 Ezra 10:15–16; 14:32; 2 Bar 44:4; 78:5; cf. Sib. Or. 3.720: δικαιότατος; *b. Sanh.* 26b; *y. Hag.* 2:1 §12; *Pesiq. Rab.* 14:6.

<sup>132</sup> Charles A. Gieschen, “The Name of the Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 238–49.

<sup>133</sup> See, for example: Jan N. Bremmer, “Close Encounters of the Third Kind: Heliodorus in the Temple and Paul on the Road to Damascus,” in *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible, and the Ancient Near East*, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 215–33; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia 65 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 631–2.

<sup>134</sup> For the foundational significance of the Sinai theophany and its influence on subsequent theophanies, see esp. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*, SOTBT (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 181–332. Note esp. the echoes and remembrances of the Sinai theophany at: Judg 5:4–5; Neh 9:13; Ps 18:8–17; 68:8–11, 18; 74:12–17; 77:17–21; 78:12–66; 97:2–6; Isa 4:5; 29:5–6; 30:27–30; 51:9–11; 60:1; 64.2; Ezek 1:4, 13, 27–28; 10:4; Hab 3:3–15; Zeph 1:15–16.

<sup>135</sup> The theophanic character of Paul’s visions has sometimes been observed, but the foundational significance of Sinai does not appear to have been recognized. For a review of major proposals, see Churchill, *Divine Initiative*, 1–31. Churchill himself does not include Exodus 19–24, 33–34 or Deuteronomy 4–5 in his (necessarily) selective analysis of Old Testament “epiphanies” (42–58). He characterizes the “Damascus Road Encounter” as a “Divine Initiative epiphany” (204–249). For brief observations on the theophanic character of Paul’s visions, see: Fergus Kerr, “Paul’s Experience: Sighting or Theophany?,” *New Blackfriars* 58 (1977): 306–13; Otto Michel, “Das Licht der Messias,” in *Donum Gentilicium: New Testament Studies in Honour of David Daube*, ed. Ernst Bammel, Charles K. Barrett, and W.D. Davies (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 40–50, esp. 44; V.S. Poythress, *Theophany: A Biblical Theology of God’s Appearing* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 56, 392.



First, Paul repeatedly refers to the Lord “appearing” to him (ὀράω: 22:18; 26:13, 16; cf. 9:17), and in this context describes “the glory of that light” (τῆς δόξης τοῦ φωτός ἐκείνου) that blinded him (22:11).<sup>136</sup> This language evokes the LORD’s “appearance” in “glory” at Sinai, and in the subsequent theophany tradition, which regularly combines the verb רָאָה (LXX: ὀράω) with reference to “the glory of the LORD” (הַגְּדֻלָּהּ / הָאֱדֻלָּהּ / הָאֱדֻלָּהּ / הָאֱדֻלָּהּ) to speak of the LORD’s visible manifestation of his presence on earth.<sup>137</sup> Crucially, both Exodus and Isaiah declare that the LORD’s “glory” is his unique possession, closely associated with his “name,” such that to “see” the LORD’s “glory” is to come as close as is humanly possible to seeing the LORD himself (Exod 33:18–19, 22; 34:5–7; Isa 42:8; 48:11). The early Jewish texts continue to associate “glory” with the manifestation of God’s presence on earth,<sup>138</sup> while the Greco-Roman epiphany texts, by contrast, do not use δόξα language in this way.<sup>139</sup> Earlier in Acts, Stephen speaks of “the God of glory” who “appeared” to Abraham (7:2: Ὁ θεὸς τῆς δόξης ὡφθῆ), and then sees “the glory of God” and the risen Jesus at God’s “right hand” (7:55: εἶδεν δόξαν θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦν ἐστῶτα ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ). In this context, Paul’s use of the same language characterizes his vision as a theophany. Certainly this pattern of speech finds significant parallels in Paul’s letters, where the apostle regularly speaks of how Jesus “appeared” (ὀράω) to him, and identifies Jesus as the revelation of “the glory of the Lord / God” (ἡ δόξα κυρίου / θεοῦ).<sup>140</sup>

Second, Paul describes “a great flashing light from heaven” (22:6: ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ περιαστράψαι φῶς ἰκανόν; 26:13: οὐρανόθεν ὑπὲρ τὴν λαμπρότητα τοῦ ἡλίου περιλάμψαν με φῶς; cf. 9:3) through which the Lord Jesus manifested his

<sup>136</sup> Modern translations render δόξα with “brightness” (RSV, NRSV, ESV, CSB), “brilliance” (NIV), or “Klarheit” (Lutherbibel 2017). This is correct at the level of denotation, but misses the theophanic connotations. Better is the KJV, which renders δόξα with “glory”.

<sup>137</sup> רָאָה / ὀράω with הַגְּדֻלָּהּ / הָאֱדֻלָּהּ / הָאֱדֻלָּהּ / הָאֱדֻלָּהּ: Exod 16:7, 10; 33:23; Lev 9:6, 23–24; Num 14:10, 22; 16:19; 17:7; 20:6; 2 Chr 7:3; Ps 63:3; 97:6; 102:17; Isa 35:2; 40:5; 60:2; 66:18–19; Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 8:4; 10:22 LXX; 44:4. Related to this: (1.) מְרָאָה: Exod 24:17 [LXX: τὸ εἶδος]; Ezek 1:28 [LXX: ἡ ὄρασις]; (2.) הָרָאָה: Ps 63:3; Isa 33:17. See, further, Carey C. Newman, *Paul’s Glory Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric*, NovTSupp 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 24, 133, 190; “God and Glory and Paul, Again: Divine Identity and Community Formation in the Early Jesus Movement,” in Novenson, *Monotheism and Christology*, 109–110, 112–3.

<sup>138</sup> E.g. 1 En. 25:3–4; 27:2–4; 102:3; Pss. Sol. 17:31; Tob 3:15–16; T. Abr. A 13:4; T. Levi 8:11; 4 Ezra 7:38–42, 87, 91 (cf. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 223: “In 4 Ezra, going back to biblical usage, ‘glory’ is connected with the appearance of God on earth”); 2 Bar. 21:23, 25. Note, however, that Pss. Sol. 17:31–32 applies Isaiah’s vision of “the glory of the Lord” (Isa 66:18–20) to “the Lord Messiah.” (Cf. William T. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 103).

<sup>139</sup> Newman, “God and Glory,” 102–9.

<sup>140</sup> For Jesus “appearing” (ὀράω) to Paul: 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; cf. Gal 1:16 (ἀποκαλύπτω). For Jesus as the revelation of “the glory of God”: 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4, 6; Phil 3:21; Col 3:4; 2 Thess 1:9; 2:14; Tit 2:13; cf. Rom 5:2; 6:4; 8:18–25; 1 Cor 2:7. See *Paul’s Glory Christology*, 157–247, esp. 186; “God and Glory,” 99–138, esp. 124; cf. Sigurd Grindheim, “A Theology of Glory: Paul’s Use of Δόξα Terminology in Romans,” *JBL* 136.2 (2017): 451–65.

presence (cf. 2 Cor 4:6). This further evokes the biblical theophany tradition – again beginning at Sinai – which often associates the LORD’s presence with “lightning” (קֶרֶק / ἄστραπή),<sup>141</sup> or with bright “light” described in other terms.<sup>142</sup> Third, Paul’s description of the “voice” (φωνή) which addressed him from heaven (22:7, 9, 14; 26:14: φωνή; cf. 9:4, 7) also evokes the biblical reports of the theophany at Sinai, the only places in Israel’s Scriptures where the LORD God addresses his people with an audible “voice from heaven”.<sup>143</sup> Some early Jewish texts similarly describe a voice from heaven as the voice of God,<sup>144</sup> and in the New Testament, a “voice from heaven” is almost always either the voice of God,<sup>145</sup> or – in Acts and Revelation – the voice of the risen and exalted Lord Jesus, himself divine.<sup>146</sup> Finally, in this context, Paul’s description of how the “Lord” (κύριος) revealed his name to him (22:8; 26:15: κύριος + Ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς; cf. 9:5) evokes the LORD’s progressive revelation of his “name” to Moses at Sinai (Exod 3:14 LXX: Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν; Exod 3:15; 33:19; 34:5 LXX: ὄνομα + κύριος).<sup>147</sup> The collocation of references to the “Lord” (κύριος) and his “appearing” (ὀράω) in “glory” (δόξα) and “light” (φῶς) with an audible “voice” (φωνή) to reveal his “name” (ὄνομα) seems deliberate: Paul characterizes his encounter with the risen Lord Jesus as a further, climactic, revelation of the “name” of the God of Sinai.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>141</sup> קֶרֶק (LXX: ἄστραπή): Exod 19:16; 2 Sam 22:15; Ps 18:15; 77:19; 97:4; 144:6; Ezek 1:13; Dan 10:6; Hab 3:11 LXX; Zech 9:14 (note LXX strengthens the identification of the LORD with the lightning by omitting the Hebrew text’s reference to “his arrow”: καὶ κύριος [...] ἐξελεύσεται ὡς ἄστραπή βολίς / “the LORD [...] will go forth as a lightning bolt”).

<sup>142</sup> (1.) דִּפְדִּי [LXX: λαμπάς]: Exod 20:18; (2.) אור [LXX: φῶς]: Job 36:30, 32–33; 37:3, 11, 15 (esp. 36:33: “its crashing declares his presence”); (3.) קִינָה: Ezek 1:4; (4.) נֶגֶן (LXX: φέγγος): 2 Sam 22:13; Ps 18:13 [LXX: τηλαύγησις]; Isa 4:5 [φῶς]; 60:3 [λαμπρότης]; 60:19 [φωτίζω; compared with the moon]; Ezek 1:4, 13, 27–28; 10:4; Hab 3:4, 11. In the early Jewish literature, compare: Wis 5:21; 2 Bar. 53:8–10. The latter text describes the Messiah’s appearance in these terms.

<sup>143</sup> Exod 20:22; Deut 4:12, 15, 33, 36; 5:4, 22; Neh. 9:13. Cf. Dan 4:28 where an unidentified “voice from heaven” addresses Nebuchadnezzar.

<sup>144</sup> 2 Bar. 22:1–2; T. Lev. 2:6; 18:6–7. The latter references may reflect Christian influence.

<sup>145</sup> Matt 3:17 // Mark 1:11 // Luke 3:22; Matt 17:5 // Mark 9:7 // 9:35; cf. 2 Pet 1:18; John 12:28–30.

<sup>146</sup> Acts 10:13, 15; 11:7, 9; Rev 4:1; 10:4, 8; 11:12; 12:10; 14:13; 18:4. For Revelation, see Brandon D. Smith, “The Identification of Jesus with YHWH in the Book of Revelation: A Brief Sketch,” *CTR* 14 (2016): 67–84.

<sup>147</sup> The self-identification Ἐγὼ εἰμι does not necessitate a reference to the divine name (e.g. Luke 1:19; Acts 10:21; 22:3; 26:29), but carries this connotation when associated with the other indications of theophany noted above. Cf. Gen 15:7; 17:1; 26:24; 28:13; 31:13; 35:11; 46:3; Exod 3:6, 14–17; 20:2; Isa 41:4; 43:10, 25; 45:8, 18–19, 22; 46:4, 9; 48:12, 17; 51:12; 52:6. Within Acts, note 7:32; 18:10. In Acts 22, the allusion to God’s revelation of his name at Sinai is further strengthened by Ananias’ reference to “the God of our fathers” (22:14: Ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν; Exod 3:13, 15, 16 LXX: ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν). For the revelation of the divine “name” associated with theophany, see esp. Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGJU 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 30–3. For these associations in Acts 9:5, see: Keener, *Acts*, 2:1638.

<sup>148</sup> See esp. Exod 3:1–15: κύριος + ὀράω + ὄνομα; 24:9–18 LXX: κύριος + ὀράω + δόξα; 33:18–

In addition to these echoes of the Sinai theophany, Paul also alludes to no less than eight other texts from the biblical theophany tradition.<sup>149</sup>

1. Ananias's affirmation that "God [...] appointed you [Paul] *to know* (γνῶναι) his will, *to see* (ἰδεῖν) the Righteous One and *to hear* (ἀκούσαι) a voice from his mouth" (22:14) echoes Balaam's description of himself as one who "*hears* (ἀκούων) the words of God [...] *knows* (ἐπιστάμενος) the knowledge of the Most High [...] [and] *sees* (ἰδὼν) the vision of the Almighty" (Num 24:16 LXX).<sup>150</sup>
2. Ananias's injunction to Paul – "wash away your sins, calling on his name [ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ]" (22:16) – evokes the biblical pattern of calling on the name of the LORD, applied to Jesus throughout Acts, and especially recalls Joel's prophecy, cited earlier in Peter's Pentecost speech (2:21), that "everyone who calls on the name of the LORD [הַיְהוָה יִקְרָא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה / ὅς ἂν ἐπικαλέσεται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου] shall be saved" (Joel 3:5; cf. Acts 2:36, 38; 4:12; 9:14).<sup>151</sup>
3. The Lord Jesus's instruction to Paul – "rise and stand on your feet" (26:16: ἀνάστηθι καὶ στῆθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου) – alludes to the LORD's words to Ezekiel (Ezek 2:1: הִלָּךְ-לְעַד מִנָּה / στῆθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου), which immediately follow the prophet's vision of "the glory of the LORD" by the Chebar canal (Ezek 1:1–28).<sup>152</sup>

19 and 34:5–7 LXX: κύριος + δόξα + ὄνομα; Deut 5:24 LXX: κύριος + ὁράω + δόξα + φωνή. This constellation of terms does not occur in the same concentration anywhere else in Israel's Scriptures.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. I. Howard Marshall, "Acts," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Greg K. Beale and Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 597–9 observes allusions (2.)–(8.) but does not draw out the implications for Paul's vision as a theophany.

<sup>150</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 3:3233. In addition to the three verbs highlighted, there are two further interesting parallels between Num 24:16 and the descriptions of Paul's vision in Acts and Paul's letters. (1.) Balaam sees the "vision of the Almighty" (יְהוָה הִנֵּה / ὁρασιν θεοῦ), and Paul speaks of "the vision from heaven" (Acts 26:19: τῇ οὐρανίῳ ὁπτασίᾳ; cf. 2 Cor 12:1: ὁπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου). (2.) Balaam describes himself as "falling down with eyes uncovered" (עָיַן / ἀποκεκαλυμμένοι οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ), and Paul has his "eyes" (οἱ ὀφθαλμοί) opened (Acts 9:18), is called "to open ... eyes" (ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμούς ...) (Acts 26:18), and speaks of receiving the gospel "through a revelation / unveiling of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12: δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; cf. Gal 1:16; 2:2; Rom 1:17; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:10; 2 Cor 12:1, 7; Eph 3:3, 5).

<sup>151</sup> See above n. 60. Paul's letters make the same connection (esp. Rom 10:13 with Joel 3:5; Phil 2:9–11 with Isa 45:23; cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:2). See: Christopher K. Rowe, "Romans 10:13: What is the Name of the Lord?," *HBT* 22 (2000): 135–73; Bauckham, "Paul's Christology of Divine Identity," 195–210; Gieschen, "Ante-Nicene Christology," 128–31; idem, "Characteristic," 74–5.

<sup>152</sup> The allusion to Ezekiel 2:1 is well recognized. See: E.g. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV*, AB 28A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 759; Bruce, *Acts*, 467; Pervo, *Acts*, 632. These commentators, however, do not observe the theophanic context. The allusion is strengthened by Paul's description of how "we all fell to the ground" (26:14: πάντων τε καταπεσόντων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν; cf. 9:4; 22:7), which is characteristic of Ezekiel's response to

4. Jesus's command – "I am sending you" (26:17: ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω σε) echoes the LORD's call to the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 1:7: אֶנְשִׁיךָ / ἐξαποστείλω σε),<sup>153</sup> and perhaps also the LORD's call to Ezekiel (Ezek 2:3–4: אֶהְיֶה לְךָ כְּחַיִּי / ἐξαποστέλλω ἐγὼ σε), and Isaiah (Isa 6:8: נִלְוִיךָ יְהוָה / τίνα ἀποστείλω), both of which follow dramatic theophanic visions (Ezek 1:1–28; Isa 6:1–6).
5. Jesus's promise to Paul – "I will appear to you, delivering you from your own people and from the Gentiles" (26:17: ἐξαিরούμενός σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν) – echoes the similar promise to Jeremiah – "I am with you [...] to deliver you" (Jer 1:8, 19: אֶחַיְכֶם / ἐξαيرهῖσθαι σε), and further alludes to the words of Asaph, crying out to the LORD God to "deliver us from the nations" (1 Chr 16:35: יְהוָה יִגְדֵּל לָנוּ מִן הַגּוֹיִם / καὶ ἐξελοῦ ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν).<sup>154</sup> Indeed, Paul's use of the verb ἐξαίρεω here is particularly significant, since the LXX reserves this verb, and the designation "the LORD who delivers," for the LORD God alone.<sup>155</sup>
6. Jesus's description of Paul's mission as his "servant" – "to open their eyes" (26:16, 18: ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν) – echoes the LORD's promise, through Isaiah, that *he* [God] will send *his* "servant," to "open" blind "eyes" (Isa 42:6–7: עֵינַי פָּקַדְלִי / ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμούς; cf. 61:1 LXX).<sup>156</sup>
7. Jesus's further affirmation that he will, through Paul, cause the Gentiles to "turn from darkness to light" (26:18: τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκοτόους εἰς φῶς) reflects the LORD's promise, through Isaiah, describing what *he* [God] will do (Isa 42:16: רִאֵץ הַחֹשֶׁךְ וְיִשְׁמַח בְּאֵשׁ / ποιήσω αὐτοῖς τὸ σκότος εἰς φῶς).<sup>157</sup> Indeed, although biblical and early Jewish texts apply "light" imagery in a range of ways, in the immediate context it is Jesus who appears to Paul in "light" (9:3; 22:6; 26:13: φῶς; cf. 26:23). The parallel between turning people "from darkness to light," and "from the power of Satan to God" thus implies that he [Jesus] stands in the place of God (cf. Col 1:12–14).
8. Jesus's final promise that the Gentiles will "receive [...] a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (26:18: τοῦ λαβεῖν [...] κληρον ἐν τοῖς

his theophanic visions (Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 43:3; 44:4), although not unique to him, or theophanies (note esp. Dan 8:17–18; 10:9). Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 4:3512, 3518 recognizes these connections, but does not draw out the Christological implications.

<sup>153</sup> In Acts 26:17, the allusion to Jeremiah 1:5–8 is established by the combination of "sending" (ἐξαποστέλλω / ἀποστέλλω), "delivering" (ἐξαίρεω), and "the nations" (ἔθνος; pl. forms). Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 4:3517.

<sup>154</sup> 1 Chr 16:35 LXX and Acts 26:17 share the verb ἐξαίρεω and the prepositional phrase ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν.

<sup>155</sup> Churchill, *Divine Initiative*, 170–1, 217, 240. See also: John J. Scullion, "God in the OT," *ABD* 2:1044.

<sup>156</sup> For the allusion, see: Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 760; Keener, *Acts*, 4: 3517. Cf. Acts 13:47, where Paul includes his mission within that of the Isaianic "servant" of Isa 49:6 (cf. 42:6). In Acts 26:18 there may be a further allusion to Isa 35:4–5, where *God's* coming causes the "the eyes of the blind" to be "opened".

<sup>157</sup> For the allusion, see: Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 760.

ἡγιασμένοις πίσται τῇ εἰς ἐμέ) recalls Acts 20:32 and, behind that, Moses's celebration that when "the LORD came from Sinai," and "all his holy ones" (יְהוָה־לְךָ / πάντες οἱ ἡγιασμένοι), they received "a possession" (נַחֲלָה / κληρονομίαν) from the LORD himself (Deut 33:3–4; cf. Wis 5:5).

This rich network of allusions to biblical theophany texts cannot be accidental. In his defence speeches, Paul consistently characterizes his visions of Jesus in terms which evoke the LORD's advent at Sinai, "the Almighty's" encounter with Balaam, "the day of the LORD" prophesied by Joel, "the glory of God" seen by Ezekiel, the LORD's commissioning of the prophets, and the LORD's promise, through Isaiah, of his own return. By drawing on these texts, Paul claims that on the Damascus Road, and in the Jerusalem temple, he experienced not merely an epiphany – an appearance of a heavenly being – or a Christophany – an appearance of the Christ – but a *Christo-theophany* – an appearance of the risen Christ *as God*.<sup>158</sup>

This inclusion of an exalted human figure in the appearance of the God of Israel is certainly striking. It is, however, consistent with the trajectory of Christ-centred theophanies in Luke-Acts, which runs from Jesus's transfiguration in "lightening"-like "glory," accompanied by a Sinai-like "cloud" (Luke 9:28–36: ἐξαστράπτω + δόξα + νεφέλη),<sup>159</sup> through to his promised eschatological return "in a cloud with power and great glory" (ἐν νεφέλῃ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς) (Luke 21:25–27; cf. 9:26; Acts 1:9–11).<sup>160</sup> Moreover, this whole trajectory – including Paul's Christ-centred theophanic vision – is not without precedent in Israel's Scriptures, or parallel in early Judaism. As we have already noted, Dan 7:13–14 presents the "son of man" as an eschatological Adam, who embodies the final coming of God (above §2), and a number of early Jewish texts – especially the Parables of Enoch and Fourth Ezra – develop Daniel's vision by locating a "son of man" figure at the centre of the final divine advent.<sup>161</sup> In these texts, the exalted human figure appears not merely as an intermediary,

<sup>158</sup> This conclusion is consistent with the echoes and interpretations of the event in Paul's letters, where the apostle claims to have seen "the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6), and declares that Jesus Christ is "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8). See esp.: Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, WUNT 2/4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 5–13; Newman, *Paul's Glory Christology*, 229–40; "God and Glory," 124.

<sup>159</sup> See esp. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 380–9.

<sup>160</sup> Note, especially, the singular "cloud" (Luke 9:34–35: νεφέλη [x3]; 21:27; Acts 1:9), which recalls the singular "cloud" at Sinai (esp. Exod 34:5; Num 11:25 LXX). See further: Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, 774–7; Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1348–51; François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28–24:53*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 116–20; Robert H. Stein, "Jesus, the Destruction of Jerusalem, and the Coming of the Son of Man in Luke 21.5–38," *SBJT* 16:3 (2012): 18–27.

<sup>161</sup> 1 En. 38:2–4; 45:3–5; 48:5–7; 51:1–4; 52:4–6; 53:1–3, 7; 62:1–16; 63:11; 69:26–29; 4 Ezra 13:1–13.

or angelic figure, but as a manifestation of God himself.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, there is still a crucial difference between Paul's preaching and these biblical precedents and Jewish parallels. For while Dan 7 and the early Jewish texts dependent upon it include a human figure at the centre of the final theophany, they never identify that figure with a known individual from recent history, let alone one who was crucified on a Roman cross.

## 6. Paul's Christology within Early Judaism: Synthesis and Assessment

How "Jewish" is Paul's Christology in Acts? How we answer that question depends, of course, on how we define the adjective "Jewish."<sup>163</sup> Although much could be said, it is enough for our purposes to summarize the ways in which Paul's presentations of Jesus in Acts lay claim to Israel's God, Scriptures, and traditions, while "reconfiguring" and "re-evaluating" them in light of the resurrection and exaltation of Messiah Jesus, "the hope of Israel" (28:20).<sup>164</sup>

As we have noted, the Paul of Acts regularly claims that "the God of Israel," "the God of our fathers," who is "the God who made the world [...] the Lord of heaven and earth," also raised Jesus from the dead (13:17, 32; 17:24; 24:14). The book of Acts regularly presents Paul as appealing to "the Law and the prophets," and reasoning "from the Scriptures," as he proclaims Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah (13:15; 17:2–3; 28:23). Indeed, Paul explicitly claims that his proclamation of Jesus is both consistent with the Scriptures (24:14; 26:22–23), and in full accord with Jewish beliefs (24:15; 26:6–7) and customs (28:17).<sup>165</sup> Moreover, Paul's warnings to his contemporaries against rejecting his proclamation take the character of critique-from-within, on the basis of the prophets (13:40–41; 28:25–28). He even justifies the most immediately controversial aspect of his message – the Gentile mission – by identifying Jesus as the Isaianic "servant" destined to bring "light [...] to the Gentiles" (26:23 with Isa 42:6; 49:6), and by locating his own ministry within that commission (13:47 with Isa

<sup>162</sup> See George R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 39–42; Michael E. Stone, *Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 127–8; Gieschen, "Name of the Son of Man," 238–49; Daniel Boyarin, "Enoch, Ezra, and the Jewishness of 'High Christology,'" in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini, Matthias Henze, and Jason Zurawski, SJSJ 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 337–62; Bühner, *Messianic High Christology*, 79–82, 135–9.

<sup>163</sup> For the definitional issues, see Cynthia M. Baker, *Jew, Key Words in Jewish Studies* 7 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 16–46.

<sup>164</sup> Jipp, "Paul of Acts," 73.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Rom 1:2; 3:21; 16:26; 1 Cor 15:3–4; 2 Tim 3:15–16.



49:6).<sup>166</sup> It is Jesus, Paul claims, the risen and exalted Jewish Messiah, who has sent him to the nations (13:47; 22:21; 26:18–19).<sup>167</sup>

The content of Paul's proclamation of Jesus is fundamentally consistent with these claims. His gospel is deeply rooted in the Scriptures, and unmistakably Jewish. His speeches are soaked in the Scriptures, and he regularly cites or alludes to Scriptures not only from the Torah,<sup>168</sup> but also from the Prophets,<sup>169</sup> and the Writings.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, Paul's proclamation of Jesus – including his characterization of his message as “the gospel” (13:32; 14:15; 20:24; cf. 14:7, 21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18), his primary designation of Jesus as “the Christ” (9:22; 17:3; 18:5; 24:24; 26:23; 28:31), and his announcement of the “resurrection from the dead” (17:18, 32; 23:6; 24:15, 21; 26:23) – consistently make use of fundamentally Jewish categories.<sup>171</sup> He further announces Jesus as the “seed” of David (13:23), “the Son of God” (9:20; 13:33), the “Saviour” (13:23), “the Righteous One” (22:14), the “man [...] appointed [to] judge” (17:31), and the “Lord” himself (9:28; 16:31; 20:21; 28:31), in each case manifestly drawing on biblical designations.

Paul, however, recognizes that his Jewish contemporaries do not all read the Scriptures the way he does. He charges that “those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers” did not “understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath” (13:27).<sup>172</sup> He divides the Sanhedrin by drawing attention to the Sadducean denial of the resurrection (23:6–10; cf. 26:5–8; Luke 20:27–40).<sup>173</sup> He affirms that he worships “the God of our fathers,” but acknowledges that he does so “according to the Way, which they call a sect” (ἡν λέγουσιν αἵρεσιν) (24:14). This last statement highlights the central reason that Paul's reading of

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 44–64; Jens Schröter, “Salvation for the Gentiles and Israel: On the Relationship between Christology and People of God in Luke,” in *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon*, Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 227–46.

<sup>167</sup> Jipp, “Paul of Acts,” 72.

<sup>168</sup> Acts 13:29 (Deut 21:22–23); 14:15 (Exod 20:11); 17:26 (Deut 32:8); 17:29 (Gen 1:27); 22:14 (Num 24:16); 26:18 (Deut 33:3–4).

<sup>169</sup> Acts 13:23 (2 Sam 7:12; Isa 11:1); 13:34 (Isa 55:3 LXX); 13:41 (Hab 1:5 LXX); 14:17 (Jer 5:24); 17:24 (1 Kgs 8:27); 17:29 (Isa 40:18–20); 17:24, 25 (Isa 42:5); 17:27 (Isa 55:6; Jer 23:23); 17:29 (Isa 44:10–17); 20:28 (Isa 43:21 LXX); 22:14 (Isa 53:11); 22:16 (Joel 3:5); 26:16 (Ezek 2:1); 26:17 (Jer 1:7, 8, 19; Ezek 2:3–4; Isa 6:8); 26:18 (Isa 35:5; 42:7, 16; 61:1 LXX); 26:23 (Isa 42:6; 49:6).

<sup>170</sup> Acts 13:33 (Ps 2:7); 13:35 (Ps 16:10 LXX); 14:17 (Ps 146:6; 147:8); 17:24 (Ps 146:6); 17:25 (Ps 50:12); 17:27 (145:18); 26:17 (1 Chr 16:35).

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Paula Fredriksen, “How Jewish is God? Divine Ethnicity in Paul's Theology,” *JBL* 137 (2018): 193–212, here 211–2 makes this point in relation to “the Messiah” and “the resurrection from the dead.”

<sup>172</sup> In this regard, the rejection of Messiah Jesus is also a rejection of Moses and the prophets, who speak of him (cf. Luke 24:44).

<sup>173</sup> For discussion, see esp. Wright, *Resurrection*, 131–40.

the Scriptures differs from that of many of his contemporaries: he recognizes the crucified and risen Jesus as Israel's Messiah and Lord.

There are, therefore, several aspects of Paul's Christology that are historically novel. Paul proclaims that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer (13:27, 29; 17:3; 26:22; cf. Luke 24:46–47), and that God has now raised him from the dead, in the middle of history, ahead of the rest (13:23, 30–37; 17:31; 26:23). He affirms that Jesus is both the only "Saviour" (13:23), granting "forgiveness of sins" (13:38), and the one who will execute God's final judgment on earth (17:31). He speaks in striking terms of Jesus's blood as God's "own blood" (20:28) and – yet more remarkably – he characterizes Jesus's appearances to him from heaven as theophanies – dramatic appearances of the LORD God himself (22:6–11, 17–21; 26:12–18). None of these affirmations finds a direct antecedent in Israel's Scriptures, or a straightforward parallel in the early Jewish texts. Nevertheless, as we have seen, all of them are deeply rooted in the Scriptures, and plausible within early Judaism. Thus, while many of Paul's Christological affirmations are historically novel, they remain, in that important sense, deeply Jewish. Indeed, the book of Acts has Paul himself assert that in proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, he declares "nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass" (26:22). According to Acts, the historical novelty of Paul's gospel lies not in any departure from Moses or the Prophets, but in his declaration that those Scriptures find their surprising fulfilment in the once-crucified and now-resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>174</sup>

## 7. Conclusion: Paul's Very Jewish, Most High Christology

Paul's Christology in his speeches in Acts is simultaneously deeply rooted in Israel's Scriptures, and historically novel. At the heart of this "novel fulfilment" is Paul's declaration that the once-crucified and now-resurrected Davidic Messiah also embodies the very presence of God. Despite Fredriksen's incredulity that this "most high" Christology was "already articulated and proclaimed in Jerusalem [...] among Jews" in the earliest days of the church, the book of Acts testifies that Paul did exactly that.<sup>175</sup> Paul in Acts *both* affirms the fundamental biblical distinction between the creator God and his creation, *and* speaks of Je-

<sup>174</sup> This is reflected in the significant construction used throughout Acts, which takes the known category of "the Christ" and identifies "the Christ" as "Jesus" (5:42; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5, 28).

<sup>175</sup> Fredriksen, "How High?," 295. Fredriksen refers to "this new movement" in scholarship which claims that "Jesus *is* God" (*italics original*). While it is true that the "Early High Christology Club" (EHCC) is a relatively recent phenomenon, the explicit confession of Jesus *as* God dates to the earliest days of the church. Moreover, the mode of reasoning adopted by EHCC scholars is explicitly anticipated in earlier Christian confession (E.g. Westminster Larger Catechism, Q11 [AD 1647]).



sus in ways that include him within the unique identity of the one true God.<sup>176</sup> If this “most high” Christology anticipates the church’s later confessions at Nicea and Chalcedon, the testimony of Acts suggests that this is only because the church was following its Jewish Lord, and his Jewish apostle to the Gentiles, who recognised Jesus, Israel’s Messiah, *as* God.<sup>177</sup> It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Paul radically re-interpreted Israel’s Scriptures in the service of his proclamation of Messiah Jesus. For Paul – both in Acts and in his letters – understands Israel’s Scriptures as divinely inspired (28:25; 2 Tim 3:16), and affirms that their meaning cannot be fully grasped apart from his own apostolic gospel, which is nothing less than “the gospel [...] of God” (20:24).<sup>178</sup> Indeed, both in Acts and in his letters, Paul assumes that the Scriptures are “forward-stretching and forward-looking” and already “postulate” the gospel he proclaims (26:22; cf. Rom 1:2; Gal 3:8; 1 Cor 15:3–5).<sup>179</sup> Consistent with these Pauline convictions, Christian theology affirms that the “true and full sense” of the prophetic Scriptures cannot be known in advance of, or in abstraction from, their divinely ordained fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit-inspired interpretation of that fulfilment in the apostolic writings.<sup>180</sup> From this point of view, Paul’s Christology in Acts, while historically novel, is not a re-interpretation of the Scriptures, but a demonstration of their truest and fullest sense.

<sup>176</sup> Paul does not, however, give any indication that Jesus *became* God at any point in time. Such a thought is inimical to the biblical and Jewish understanding of God as the eternal creator (e.g. Gen 1:1; Isa 40:28). Cf. Charles K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 1998), 1:152: “he who is God is what he is from and to eternity – otherwise he is not God.”

<sup>177</sup> This does not mean that Paul, in Acts, remains trapped “between the Scylla of Sabellianism and the Charybdis of ditheism” (Fredriksen, “How High?,” 293 n. 1). Paul simultaneously identifies Jesus as God, and as God’s “Son” (9:20; 13:33), and so recognizes a personal distinction *within* the one God.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 8–9; 1 Tim 1:11: “the gospel of God”.

<sup>179</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 299.

<sup>180</sup> I allude here to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* §1.9 and the doctrine of *sensus plenior*.

# Remembering Paul in Asia Minor

## A Contested Jewish Identity in the First Four Centuries of Christianity

Lyn Kidson

### 1. Introduction

We can be in no doubt as to the impression the apostle Paul left in Asia Minor. Aberkios, bishop of Hierapolis died in the late second century and left an epitaph composed by himself. In this epitaph he tells of going on a long trip to Rome and Syria and to the farthest point East in the Roman Empire, and was accompanied “with Paul beside me on my wagon.”<sup>1</sup> He was in some ways retracing Paul’s missionary trips and symbolically extending them.<sup>2</sup> Earlier epitaphs in the remote Çarşamba Valley, south of ancient Iconium, have been found and a number of these commemorate Christian men bearing the name of Paul.<sup>3</sup> Stephen Mitchell argues that the use of Paul’s name indicates the impact of the mission of Paul in the region as described in Acts 14:1–23 and 15:36–16:5.<sup>4</sup> In a district east of Colossae, there is an epitaph that has been described as the earliest belonging to a Christian.<sup>5</sup> This epitaph is dedicated to Eutyches and is dated to the Sullan year 264, or 180 CE. Eutyches is depicted as standing with a roll of bread with a cross on it in his right hand and bunch of grapes hanging from a cross in his left hand. This imagery strongly suggests, along with the name, that this is the gravestone of a Christian. Eutyches’s father was also named Eutyches. If this Eutyches was a Christian also, suggested by his name, then the memory

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<sup>1</sup> ICG 1597; Paul McKechnie, *Christianising Asia Minor: Conversion, Communities, and Social Change in the Pre-Constantinian Era* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 151.

<sup>2</sup> McKechnie, *Christianising Asia Minor*, 162–3.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Mitchell, in a British Institute at Ankara lecture, “The Enemy Within. Rome’s Frontier with Isauria between Konya & Taurus Mountains” (9 May 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwD-UkZY3Io>; Lycaonia more broadly, Cilliers Breytenbach and Christiane Zimmermann, *Early Christianity in Lycaonia and Adjacent Areas: From Paul to Amphilocheus of Iconium*, ECAM 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 60.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchell, “The Enemy Within,” for an extensive survey of the epigraphic evidence see Breytenbach and Zimmermann, *Early Christianity*, 73–87; 90–1.

<sup>5</sup> ICG 1224; William M. Calder, “Early-Christian Epitaphs from Phrygia,” *Anatolian Studies* 5 (1955): 25–38, here 33–4, Plate 2 (b) no. 2 (= MAMA 10 App. I, 181, 13); McKechnie, *Christianising Asia Minor*, 155–6.

of Paul's raising Eutychos from the dead in Troas (Acts 20:7–12) was preserved in Phrygia in the early second century.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps we are meant to see the connection between the Phrygian Eutyches holding the bread and the grapes and the celebration of the Lord's supper by Paul after he had raised the Troas Eutychos back to life (Acts 20:11). Whatever is the case, what we seem to have is the commemoration in the name of Eutyches of Paul's activity, which we might call his "tradition." We will take "tradition" here to mean "that which is handed down" (LSJ 3: παράδοσις) to be in terms of how things are done (Mark 7:3; Matt 15:2). In turn we will take "the memory of Paul" to be a subset of παράδοσις; in other words, the figure of Paul as a historical figure which is now legendary (LSJ 2). This will help us to distinguish between the recollection of Paul's identity as Jewish and his practice of Judaism. What we are investigating in this paper is the preservation of Paul's memory as a Jew in Asia Minor.

When one examines the reception of Paul in many of the early Christian documents associated with Asia Minor from the first to the fourth century, his distinctive Jewish identity seems to disappear. I will be arguing that the battle for a purely "Christian" identity in contrast to a "Jewish" identity led to a battle over the Pauline tradition in Christian churches in Asia Minor in the first three centuries, which was all but over by the fourth century. Dennis MacDonald in *The Legend and the Apostle* argues that the *Acts of Paul* preserve oral legends of Paul and Thecla circulating in Asia Minor in the second century.<sup>7</sup> Macdonald's argument is quite persuasive and what I wish to argue is that the reception of Paul's memory was not confined to written sources. Lurking behind our written materials are oral histories and traditions about Paul.<sup>8</sup> What our written resources are testament to is the negotiations of these memories and traditions of Paul the apostle. In this chapter, I will be interrogating the Pastoral Epistles, the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, the *Acts of Paul*, and Amphilochus's "Against False Asceticism" for traces of this negotiation. I will be suggesting that the contest represented in these documents is a contest over Paul's tradition or how the Christian life was to be conducted. In this contest opponents are labelled as "Jewish," and in this arena Paul's Jewish identity disappears. The writers of the Pastoral Epistles and the story of Thecla, along with Ignatius, all appear to be distancing themselves from what they thought was "Jewish." By the end of the fourth century, this contest was over. Various Christian groups in Lycaonia continued to practice their versions of Christianity, but they were labelled by the incoming bishop Amphilochus as "heretics" and "schematics." Paul's Jewishness and his practice had ceased to be an issue.

<sup>6</sup> Εὐτυχός (Acts 20:9) is in the second declension whereas Phrygian Εὐτύχης is in the third declension.

<sup>7</sup> Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1983), 18–33.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 23.

## 2. Parameters for this Study

Before beginning with the study proper, I wish to set out some parameters for my study. Paul Trebilco argues quite persuasively against Bauer's earlier thesis that Paul's memory had disappeared from Western Asia Minor in the second century, "It is very unlikely [...] that Paul was forgotten in Western Asia Minor, as Bauer suggested. Rather, Pauline Christianity remained influential."<sup>9</sup> He builds his case using the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp. Bauer had argued that the writer of Revelation does not mention Paul because his memory had been lost, so much so that even the church in Ephesus had lost the name of its founder.<sup>10</sup> Instead, Trebilco makes the case,

The much more likely explanation is that John and some of John's readers know the Pauline tradition well, but John has chosen not to speak of that tradition. [...] It is much more likely that John made no use of the knowledge of Paul that he had. The reason for this is that John's main opposition in the seven churches was the Nicolaitans, who were involved in eating food offered to idols and in idolatry. Scholars have often drawn parallels between "the strong" at Corinth and the Nicolaitans, and suggested that the Nicolaitans may have been influenced by Paul, or may have radicalized Paul's teaching. Thus the Nicolaitans probably appealed to Paul for support.<sup>11</sup>

Trebilco makes a very salient argument that Paul's memory and his teaching were contested and selectively used. While Trebilco argues that John of Revelation chose to ignore Paul, what I want to suggest is that other writers working within the Pauline tradition made selective use of the Pauline epistles, or more correctly those that they had access to, and his tradition in oral form. Trebilco's argument was over Bauer's view that Paul's memory had disappeared in Western

<sup>9</sup> Paul Trebilco, "Christian Communities in Western Asia Minor into the Early Second Century: Ignatius and Others as Witnesses against Bauer," *JETS* 49.1 (2006): 7–44, here 34; Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1971), 33–4; Tertullian, *Bapt.* 17.5, locates the origin of *The Acts* to Asia Minor, which suggests that legends about Paul were in circulation in the early second century.

<sup>10</sup> Bauer, *Orthodoxy*, 85.

<sup>11</sup> Trebilco, "Christian Communities," 34; Trebilco here is offering a conservative assessment among the various views on what the Nicolaitans were promoting; on "eating idol food" and fornication as metaphors for idolatry or involvement in certain social practices see Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121–4; Philip A. Harland, "Honouring the Emperor or Assailing the Beast: Participation in Civic Life among Associations (Jewish, Christian and Other) in Asia Minor and the Apocalypse of John" *JSNT* 22 (2000): 99–121, here 118. Others see the Nicolaitans as actually indulging in sexual misconduct, David E. Aune, "The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John," in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays*, ed. David Aune, WUNT 199 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 175–89; George R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 85–7; Adolf von Harnack, "The Sect of the Nicolaitans and Nicolaus, the Deacon in Jerusalem," *Journal of Religion* 3 (1923): 413–22, here 414, 417. For a comprehensive discussion of the Nicolaitans, Kenneth A. Fox, "The Nicolaitans, Nicolaus and the Early Church," *Studies in Religion* 23.4 (1994): 485–96.

Asia Minor in the second century. But I think we can extend his findings based on his observation that there was a contest over competing “orthodox” traditions.<sup>12</sup> Trebilco argues that the contest was over church structure rather than doctrinal disputes in Ephesus and Tralles.<sup>13</sup> Putting this together, our starting point is Trebilco’s observation that Paul’s tradition, including his letters, are still in active use in Western Asia Minor. Our study will be extending this view, focusing on the reception of Paul from Western Asia Minor to Lycaonia in the east, examining it for the use of his Jewish identity or otherwise. The time frame for this reception will roughly cover from the latter first century to the mid second century; or from the Pastoral Epistles, which I date with Trebilco from 80 CE to the writing of the *Acts of Paul*, which dates from about 170–175 CE.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike Trebilco and more like Bauer, I wish to move away from the ideas of “heresy” and “orthodoxy” in our study. History is written by the victor; he or she also preserves those documents that align with his or her view of that history. With Bauer I wish to think of “Christianities” in Asia, not just within a geographical region, but within the churches themselves.<sup>15</sup> In other words, various views of the Christian life laid side by side in this period and in these churches.<sup>16</sup> Unlike Trebilco, I wish to argue that it was not just church structure that was the central issue in the churches of Ephesus and Tralles, but in these churches, indeed in all the churches of Asia Minor, there were competing views on the practice of Christianity.<sup>17</sup> These are what I would call competing identities and alignments with various strands of Christian tradition. As in Corinth, in Paul’s time, there quickly sprang up competing groups, most likely centred around a household and a householder.<sup>18</sup> The various groups held to

<sup>12</sup> Trebilco suggests that there was an “orthodox group” in both the Pauline and the Johanne tradition that was “early, strong” and continuous. He assumes that there was a “proto-orthodoxy” shared between the two communities, “Christian Communities,” 41.

<sup>13</sup> Trebilco, “Christian Communities,” 28–9.

<sup>14</sup> Date of the Pastoral Epistles, Trebilco, “Christian Communities,” 20, 39; cf. Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, repr., vol. 1, ECC (Grand Rapids; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2000), 19. It is unlikely that the Pastoral Epistles were written by the historical Paul, Lyn M. Kidson, *Persuading Shipwrecked Men: Rhetorical Strategies of 1 Timothy 1*, WUNT 526 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 11–3. On the date of *Acts of Paul*, Richard I. Pervo, *The Acts of Paul: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2014), ebook, “Introduction.”

<sup>15</sup> Bauer and his underlying assumption of “lost Christianities,” see Trebilco, “Christian Communities,” 18.

<sup>16</sup> For an overview of the issues see Bradley J. Bitner, “Unity and Diversity in Emergent Christianity,” in *Into All the World: Emergent Christianity in its Jewish and Greco-Roman Context*, ed. Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 74–104.

<sup>17</sup> “A way of life handed down to us from our forefathers” in response to competing “customs” between Christian and “pagan,” Clement of Alexandria, *The Exhortation to the Greeks (Protrepticus)*, trans. G. W. Butterworth, LCL 92 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), X.89; Competing practices Tertullian, *Jejun.* 1; Lyn M. Kidson, “Fasting, Bodily Care, and the Widows of 1 Timothy 5:3–15,” *EC* 11:2 (2020): 191–205.

<sup>18</sup> J. Brian Tucker, *You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in*

various strands of practice and tradition. Although they shared overlapping theological doctrines, they were competing for members and for a distinct identity. We should not discount the four parties that Paul mentions. Factionalism like this was a feature of Roman life.<sup>19</sup> I suggest each householder claimed to be a receiver of Paul's or Apollos' or Peter's or Jesus' way of doing things; that is, their "tradition." That all shared theological commonalities did not spare them from factionalism. Indeed, it has been observed that the most intense rivalries occur between those with the closest shared similarities; in other words, identity brawls are likely to be fieriest over commonly shared ground and the need to distance oneself from one's rival.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the working hypothesis for this paper is that the various rival Christian groups within Asia cannot be divided up into "orthodox" and "heretical" camps. What we have, as Trebilco suggests, is a common pool of tradition handed down, including various written materials, which the varying groups availed themselves of or did not; or emphasised or demoted as it suited their particular claims to hold to the Christian tradition.

Therefore, while the surviving materials in our possession take a distinct "them" and "us" stance, we cannot allow ourselves to be drawn into "taking sides." All educated men were trained in rhetoric.<sup>21</sup> They all understood, at least, the basics of making a persuasive argument. The aim of Ignatius and the writer of the Pastoral Epistles is to persuade their audiences that the "Other" is indeed the "other" and not to associate with them.<sup>22</sup> These are polemical materials or at the very least materials that contain polemical materials.<sup>23</sup> In 1989, John Barclay published an article on Paul's opponents in Galatians.<sup>24</sup> In this

*1 Corinthians 1–4* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 158–66, here 174; Adam G. White, *Where Is the Wise Man? Graeco-Roman Education as a Background to the Divisions in 1 Corinthians 1–4* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 10–1.

<sup>19</sup> Peter N. Singer, "The Fight for Health: Tradition, Competition, Subdivision and Philosophy in Galen's Hygienic Writings," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22:5 (2014): 974–95; Giovanni Salmeri, "Reconstructing the Political Life and Culture of the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire," in *Political Culture in the Greek City after the Classical Age*, ed. Onno van Nijf and Richard Alston (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 197–214. Odd Magne Bakke, "Concord and Peace": *A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Unity and Sedition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Lloyd K. Pietersen, "Despicable Deviants: Labelling Theory and the Polemic of the Pastorals," *Sociology of Religion* 58:4 (1997): 343–52, here 346–7.

<sup>21</sup> Kidson, *Persuading Shipwrecked Men*, 2; 148–9; Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> For a sociological definition of "othering" see Michal Krumer-Nevo and Mirit Sidi, "Writing against Othering," *Qualitative Inquiry* 18:4 (2012): 299–309: "Othering, which refers to Otherness as the process of attaching moral codes of inferiority to difference." On this tactic against community leaders in the PE, Pietersen, "Despicable Deviants," 349.

<sup>23</sup> Robert J. Karris, "The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles," *JBL* 92:4 (1973): 549–64.

<sup>24</sup> John M. G. Barclay, "Mirror Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *JNT* 31 (1987): 73–93.

article he outlined a method for identifying those opponents. He warned those wanting to reconstruct the situation behind Galatians not to rely on a mirror reading of the polemics in a simplistic fashion:

If we are to understand such polemics, we must make every effort to clarify the origin and nature of the relevant dispute; and an indispensable ingredient of that effort will be the attempt to reconstruct the attitudes and arguments of the other side in the debate. However much we may be predisposed to agree with the New Testament authors' arguments, we will not understand their real import until we have critically reconstructed the main issues in the dispute and allowed ourselves to enter into the debate from both sides.<sup>25</sup>

Like Galatians, we have no independent witness to the views of the opponents of Ignatius or the writer of the Pastoral Epistles:

But here we run up against a formidable obstacle. In most cases we have no independent witness to the arguments of those under attack in the New Testament; our only access to their thoughts and identities is via the very documents which oppose them. Hence the necessity for one of the most difficult and delicate of all New Testament critical methods: we must use the text which answers the opponents as a *mirror* in which we can see reflected the people and the arguments under attack.<sup>26</sup>

Barclay identified two problems in reconstructing the opponents' arguments:

- In the first place, Paul is not directly addressing the opponents in Galatians, but he is talking to the Galatians about the opponents.
- The second point to remember is that this is no calm and rational conversation that we are overhearing, but a fierce piece of polemic in which Paul feels his whole identity and mission are threatened and therefore responds with all the rhetorical and theological powers at his command.<sup>27</sup>

The same can be said for the writers we are interested in and their use of Paul's tradition and memory. They are not directly addressing their opponents nor are they systematically outlining their opponents' views. My assumption is that they are doing two things at the same time. They are both constructing an image of Paul that suits their needs *and* utilizing rhetorical devices to reduce the influence of those they see as "other."

### 3. The Memory of Paul as Jewish: Two Hypotheses

Numerous scholars have tackled Paul's formation of a new identity "in Christ" for Jews and gentiles. Paul in his letters was not constructing a systematic scheme for this identity; unlike his Roman counterparts he was not writing a

<sup>25</sup> Barclay, "Mirror Reading," 73.

<sup>26</sup> Barclay, "Mirror Reading," 73.

<sup>27</sup> Barclay, "Mirror Reading," 74–5.



new mythic epic of the origins of a new identity.<sup>28</sup> In commenting on this Caroline Johnson Hodge observes that although Paul argues that Jews and gentiles share a common ancestor, Abraham, he “does not collapse them into one group (of ‘Christians,’ for example). Gentiles-in-Christ and Jews represent separate but related lineages of Abraham.”<sup>29</sup> Further she argues that Paul’s Jewish identity nested identities that could “operate independently of the others” (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5–6; Gal 1:16; 2:16; 2:20).<sup>30</sup> In these facets of his identity, she argues, “Paul reprioritizes” in order to gain access to gentile communities.<sup>31</sup> Paul thus does not give up being a Jew, but “adjusted his own observances so that he can eat and live with gentiles without asking them to observe the Law.”<sup>32</sup> This carefully crafted identity, I would argue, could not be sustained by the Christ followers who came after Paul. As Johnson Hodge notes at the beginning of her study, there was a shift to a universal identity, which transcends ethnicity.<sup>33</sup> Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215 CE) crafted a Christian identity that was inclusive and transcendent.<sup>34</sup> Denise Buell points out that for Clement “ethnic distinctions consist especially of differences in how one worships.”<sup>35</sup> Utilizing an earlier work, *Preaching of Peter*, she says “accordingly from the Hellenic training and also from the law, who accept into *the one* *genos of the saved people*.”<sup>36</sup> For Clement, pagans, Jews, and Christians “differ not in *what* they worship but in *how* they worship; Christians constitute the race that not only correctly understands the deity it venerates but also knows the proper practices of veneration.”<sup>37</sup>

Given this framework, our investigation will be looking closely for how the memory of Paul’s identity and tradition was negotiated in terms of race and practice in the literature of Asia Minor. I will be testing two hypotheses: *The first hypothesis* I will be testing is whether each writer is utilizing the same strategy to style Paul as the originator and defender of their tradition.<sup>38</sup> Do the writers downplay Paul’s Jewish identity? *The second hypothesis* I will be testing

<sup>28</sup> Caroline J. Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5; the formation of new mythical origins for Augustan Rome see Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 167–263.

<sup>29</sup> Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 120–1.

<sup>31</sup> Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 121–2.

<sup>32</sup> Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 122.

<sup>33</sup> Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 4; Denise Kimber Buell, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition,” *HTR* 94:4 (2001): 449–76.

<sup>35</sup> Buell, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race,” 461.

<sup>36</sup> Strom. 6.42.2; Buell, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race,” 461.

<sup>37</sup> Buell, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race,” 462.

<sup>38</sup> Jens Herzer, “Was ist falsch an der ‚fälschlich so genannten Gnosis‘? Zur Paulusrezeption des Ersten Timotheusbriefes im Kontext seiner Gegnerpolemik,” *EC* 5:1 (2014): 68–96, here 77–8.



is whether they are characterising their opponents' tradition as "Jewish," as distinct from a universal "Christian" tradition.

It is difficult to trace strands of Paul's identity into reception history, given the patchiness of preservation of material. Our greatest hurdle is actually the preserved letters that we have in the New Testament. Our writers have access to an oral tradition outside of the letters, and they did not necessarily have access to all the letters as we have them.<sup>39</sup> We, on the other, have a corpus of letters, but we no longer have access to the oral tradition of Paul that was preserved in Asia Minor.

#### 4. Pauline Tradition in Asia Minor

We will now work through the material chronologically from the Pastoral Epistles to the *Acts of Paul*. What we are hoping to do here, as Barclay suggests, is to "critically reconstruct the main issues in the dispute" for our writers. We also need to describe the memory of Paul in these documents.

##### 4.1 *The Pastoral Epistles*

The greatest difficulty with piecing together the underlying memory of Paul in the Pastoral Epistles is the assumption by the writer that his audience is familiar with Paul's history.<sup>40</sup> In the opening salutation of 1 Timothy relies on shared knowledge between the writer and the audience, built, it seems, on the Corinthian correspondence:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus [according to a command] of God (κατ' ἐπιταγὴν θεοῦ) our saviour, and Christ Jesus, who is our hope. (1 Tim 1:1)

It is structured in a similar way to 1 and 2 Corinthians:

Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God (διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ). (1 Cor 1:1)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God (διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ). (2 Cor 1:1)

I have argued that the change from διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ to κατ' ἐπιταγὴν θεοῦ was an indication that the writer was styling the Pauline biography in the terms common in Asia Minor:

The phrase "by a command of God" in 1 Timothy is evocative in the Asia Minor context. It relates to the appearance of a deity, who commands the devotee in a vision or dream.

<sup>39</sup> Wilhem Schneemelcher and Robert L. Wilson note that it cannot be assumed that all communities "possessed a complete exemplar of the NT" and had "probably only separate writings," in the second century, *Writings Relating to the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, rev. ed., New Testament Apocrypha, vol.2 (Cambridge, UK; Louisville: James Clarke; Westminster, John Knox Press, 1992), 3.

<sup>40</sup> Kidson, *Persuading Shipwrecked Men*, 49–54, 98–7, 102.

For readers in Ephesus or anywhere in Anatolia, the appellation “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God” in 1 Timothy would imply that Paul had seen a vision and had received a command. This indicates the writer of 1 Timothy has made a conscious decision to select the phrase “by the command of God” to describe pastoral Paul’s appointment as an apostle.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the writer of 1 Timothy is aware of the Pauline tradition that historical Paul had become an apostle by seeing the Lord (1 Cor 9:1) through a vision (Acts 9:3–8; Gal 1:11–2). But the writer of 1 Timothy eschews the self-image of Paul as one who had “advanced in Judaism” and was “zealous for the traditions of my ancestors” (Gal 1:14). His image of Paul in 2 Timothy is moderated: Paul worshipped “as my ancestors did” (2 Tim 1:3). This reflects Timothy’s upbringing in “faith” by his mother and grandmother. However, nothing is said of their Judaism; the reader must rely on his or her knowledge of the tradition of Paul meeting Timothy in Lystra (cf. Acts 16:1–3). We should notice that 2 Tim 3:11 reflects the story of Paul’s journey from Antioch to Iconium and Lystra (Acts 13:13–20). This reminds the reader of the persecution Paul received at the hands of the Jews (Acts 13:50). On the other hand, the writer seems not to know the entirety of Paul’s itinerary as laid out in Acts.<sup>42</sup> Rather, the writer appears to be relying on the itinerary that Paul lays out in 1 Cor 16: he intends to travel to Corinth “after passing through Macedonia,” but in the meantime he is staying in Ephesus to deal with “many adversaries” (1 Cor 16:5–9). According to this timeline, Paul has left Ephesus to travel to Macedonia leaving Timothy in charge (1 Tim 1:3). In Titus, Paul writes to Titus in Crete from Nicopolis (Tit 3:12), so we can surmise that the writer pictures him writing to Timothy from there as well. Acts represents another Pauline biography that is almost impossible to reconcile with the Pastoral Epistles.<sup>43</sup> On the positive side, what we have is the possible blending of an oral tradition and Paul’s firsthand account of his plans in 1 Corinthians.<sup>44</sup>

The important picture we have of Paul from 1 Timothy is a Paul who uses Scripture. The wrangle with the opponents in 1 Timothy seems to be over the use of Scripture (1 Tim 1:7). But pastoral Paul asserts that “the law is good, if one uses it lawfully” (1 Tim 1:8). He uses Genesis 1–3 twice (1 Tim 2:13–14; 4:3–5) to combat the opponents’ teaching. We are on the safest ground here to identify the use of Scripture as a distinctive of Paul’s Jewish upbringing. In 1 Timothy both pastoral Paul and the opponents value the Scriptures but they are at variance in

<sup>41</sup> Kidson, *Persuading Shipwrecked Men*, 95.

<sup>42</sup> Christopher R. Hutson, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 8.

<sup>43</sup> Hutson, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, 8; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2006), 10–5.

<sup>44</sup> A Pauline tradition preserved in Ephesus and centred on the Corinthian correspondence? 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 1:18; 4:12; 1 Cor 15:31; 16:8: “But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.” Further, Ignatius quotes 1 Cor 1:19, 20, 23; in *Eph.* 18.1.

some way, most likely in their use of them.<sup>45</sup> At the very least the memory of Paul here is that he is skilled in Jewish methods of interpretation.

This brings us to the characterization of the opponents in the Pastoral Epistles. Using Barclay's method for identifying "the main issues in the dispute" eight points can be discerned:

1. The opponents are believers in the Christian community (1 Tim 1:3–4), but have been expelled (1 Tim 1:20).
2. They teach the "law" (1 Tim 1:6–7). This involves a lot of discussion and research (1 Tim 1:4; 6:4–5).
3. This research is into origins and genealogies (1 Tim 1:4; Tit 1:14; 3:9) and this produces arrogance and ignorance, "a madness about research and disputes" (1 Tim 1:3–4; 6:4; Tit 3:9).<sup>46</sup>
4. They are ascetics (1 Tim 4:1–5). They forbid marriage and abstain from certain foods (a special diet calculated to reduce sexual urges).<sup>47</sup>
5. Pastoral Paul responds with an interpretation of Genesis arguing that marriage is good (1 Tim 4:3–4).<sup>48</sup> This implies that the first chapters of Genesis are under debate.
6. In Titus the "myths" of 1 Tim 1:4; 4:7 and 2 Tim 4:4 are defined as "Jewish" (Tit 1:14).<sup>49</sup> However, in 2 Timothy Pastoral Paul utilizes non-canon Jewish literature or folklore – Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim 3:8).<sup>50</sup> The mention of these Egyptian magicians suggests a reliance on extra-canonical material by both Pastoral Paul and the opponents.
7. Some claim that the resurrection has already happened (2 Tim 2:18). As Thornton argued "the most likely interpretation of 2 Tim 2:18 is that the opponents immaterialized the resurrection. For the false teachers in Ephesus, ἀνάστασις was a purely spiritual event, fully realized in the present."<sup>51</sup>
8. This does imply a focus on eschatology by the opponents.

In summary, the opponents of Pastoral Paul appear to be as Jewish as he is. This makes the process of distancing those who are now "the other" difficult as there are overlapping identities. Yet in Titus Pastoral Paul calls "myths" or stories of origin, "Jewish." We cannot take this at face value; it does not necessarily mean

<sup>45</sup> Herzer, "Was Ist Falsch," 78.

<sup>46</sup> Kidson, *Persuading Shipwrecked Men*, 124–32.

<sup>47</sup> Kidson, "Fasting, Bodily Care," 192–205.

<sup>48</sup> Robert W. Wall, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, The Two Horizons NT Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 93.

<sup>49</sup> Perplexingly Dillion T. Thornton excludes Titus in his study, *Hostility in the House of God: An Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy*, BBRSup (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 7.

<sup>50</sup> Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, repr., vol. 2, ECC (Grand Rapids; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2000), 727–30.

<sup>51</sup> Thornton, *Hostility in the House of God*, 250.

that the opponents are Jewish Christians.<sup>52</sup> The writer has engaged in a familiar rhetorical strategy where he characterises his opponents with negatively valued descriptors; what Karris called “name calling.”<sup>53</sup> The opponents are occupying their time with “myths and genealogies” in 1 Timothy and the “myths” are Jewish in Titus. Thus “Jewish” is a negative descriptor. What we don’t have is anything that could be readily identifiable as a “Jewish myth”: such a search would be futile. What we have are either oral traditions (?) or literature being utilised in a Christian context that could be labelled as “myths” and as “Jewish” by an opponent. Certainly, we can surmise that the writer of the Pastoral Epistles would wish to distance Paul from the opponents, their interpretive methods, and their literature or oral traditions that could be labelled as “Jewish myths.” Paul’s Jewishness is thus downplayed except for his skill as an interpreter of Scripture.

#### 4.2 Paul in Ignatius

We will now briefly turn to Ignatius’s letters. Recently, John Marshall has made the persuasive case that the Christians that Ignatius was opposed to were not two groups but one: “understood as a single group of Jewish Christians who understand Jesus to be an angel.”<sup>54</sup> Marshall utilizes a similar method to Barclay to identify the points at issue. He identifies three characteristics, the third of which is “Judaising.” As Marshall describes “It seems that the practices undertaken, the texts interpreted and the associations kept by the objects of Ignatius’ wrath were oriented towards Judaism more strongly than Ignatius thought proper.”<sup>55</sup> In *Magnesian* 8.1–2a, Ignatius in similar strains to the Pastoral Epistles, urges his readers:

Do not be deceived by false opinions (ταῖς ἑτεροδοξίαις) or old fables that are of no use. For if we have lived according to Judaism until now, we admit that we have not received God’s gracious gift. For the most divine prophets lived according to Jesus Christ (*Magn.* 8.1–2).<sup>56</sup>

As Marshall sums up, “This demonstrates two of the areas of Judaism that Ignatius sees as incompatible with Christianity: texts (strange doctrines or old

<sup>52</sup> Herzer, “Was Ist Falsch,” 76; Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 109–12; Douglas Boin describes how the writer of 2 Maccabees stigmatizes Jews who engage in “Greek” cultural practices as “Greeks,” “‘Hellenistic Judaism’ and the Social Origins of the ‘Pagan-Christian’ Debate,” *J ECS* 22:2 (2014): 167–96, here 176–80.

<sup>53</sup> Karris, “The Background and Significance,” 549.

<sup>54</sup> John W. Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath and Jewish Angelic Mediators,” *J EH* 56:1 (2005): 1–23, here 18.

<sup>55</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 7.

<sup>56</sup> All quotes from Ignatius taken from *The Apostolic Fathers, Volume 1: I Clement. II Clement. Ignatius. Polycarp. Didache*, ed. & trans. Bart D. Ehrman, LCL 24 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

fables) and practices (living according to Judaism).<sup>57</sup> Whereas the writer of 1 Timothy inveighs against those promoting the “other educational program” (ἐτεροδιδασκαλεῖν; 1 Tim 1:3; 6:3), Ignatius rails against the “heterodoxies” (ταῖς ἑτεροδοξίαις) and old myths that are profitless (cf. 1 Tim 1:4b, 6–7; Tit 1:16).<sup>58</sup> We find out from Ignatius that these other Christians were keeping the Sabbath (*Magn.* 9.1). Similarly, in the letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius castigates certain Christians for promoting Judaism:

But if anyone should interpret Judaism to you, do not hear him. For it is better to hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from one who is uncircumcised. (*Phld.* 6.1)

As Marshall describes, “Ignatius indicates the complexity of the issue of Jewish Christianity, but he should be taken (almost) literally: there are people who are ethnic Jews and who preach what Ignatius calls Christianity and there are people who are not ethnic Jews and who preach what Ignatius calls Judaism, though a scholarly observer might call it Jewish Christianity.”<sup>59</sup> In contrast, Daniel Boyarin rejects the idea that “Jewish Christianity” ever existed, but the point remains that Ignatius is fashioning a conception and practice of Christianity that he thinks is in contrast to Jewish practice or in his terms “Judaism.”<sup>60</sup>

Marshall then goes on to make the case that the opponents’ claim that Jesus only seemed to be suffering was rooted in Judaism.<sup>61</sup> In his letter to the Trallians he says “But if, as some who are atheists – that is, unbelievers – say, that he only appeared (τὸ δοκεῖν) to suffer (it is they who are the appearance)” (*Trall.* 10.1). These people are “atheists” and in *Smyrn.* 2 they are “faithless.” Although Ignatius does not make explicit that he considers those who hold this view as “Jewish,” Marshall makes the case that such a view is built on the Jewish ideas about angelic mediators found both in the Septuagint and in the Jewish literature.<sup>62</sup> In Tobit the angel Raphael reveals his other worldliness:

As for me, when I was with you, I was acting not of my own will, but by the will of God. Bless him each and every day; sing his praises. Although you were watching me, I really did not eat or drink anything – but what you saw was a vision. (Tob 12:18–19)<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 7.

<sup>58</sup> “Other educational program”: Kidson, “Fasting, Bodily Care,” 204; William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 118.

<sup>59</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 8–9.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is appended correction of my *Border Lines*),” *JQR* 99:1 (2009): 7–36; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), passim.

<sup>61</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 6–7.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Amphilochius of Iconium, “Previously it seemed to some of them that He appeared to Abraham through angels ...,” Homily 1, ll.26–49; trans. J.H. Barkhuizen, “Amphilochius of Iconium: Homily 1 ‘on the Nativity,’” *APB* 12:1 (2001): 1–23.

<sup>63</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 10–1.

And at Qumran, the evidence suggests the archangel Michael was a “angelic, messianic redeemer figure.”<sup>64</sup> This evidence makes it feasible to suggest that some Christians thought that Jesus was a mediating angel. Both the Gospel of Thomas and Hebrews (Heb 1:5–14) combat the idea that Jesus was an angel.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, the Shepherd of Hermas, whose Christology is not all that clear, does “imply [at several points] that the angel who is in charge of the salvation of the recipient of the visions and of humanity as a whole *is the same figure as the Son of God* elsewhere in the work.”<sup>66</sup> Other Christian works, such as the *Sibylline Oracles* (8.456–64) and the Ascension of Isaiah (9:33–7), also suggest that Jesus is an angel.<sup>67</sup> Epiphanius in the fourth century describes the Ebionites, or Jewish Christians, as teaching that Jesus was not begotten of God the Father “but created like one of the archangels, [they understand] him to rule also angels and everything made by the almighty” (*Pan.* 30.16.4).<sup>68</sup> Thus Marshall’s argument that Ignatius was defending against a non-corporeal Jesus that he labelled as “Jewish” is quite cogent. Specifically, in the letter to the Magnesians, those who have been deceived by “false opinions or old fables” (as quoted above) are also Sabbath keepers who deny the reality of Jesus’ death, “and so those who lived according to the old ways came to a new hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living according to the Lord’s day, on which also our life arose through him and his death – which some deny” (*Magn.* 9.1).

While I agree with Marshall that Ignatius is disparaging his opponents as “Jewish” and that they hold to Jewish practices, we should be careful in describing these Christians as “Jewish Christians.”<sup>69</sup> Ignatius takes a step further than the writer of the Pastoral Epistles by jettisoning a Jewish identity for Christians and developing a new identity. As Douglas Boin argues:

He is the first to juxtapose Ἰουδαϊσμός with a new word of his own, “Christianism” (Χριστιανισμός), a term that historians customarily translate “Christianity.” Ignatius coins this term, however, not to give birth to a new religion but in order to set up a contrast between followers of Jesus who rely too much upon identifiably Jewish practices and others who have given them up.<sup>70</sup>

Boin then goes on to make the case that Eusebius develops this idea from Ignatius and other earlier writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, “who had present-

<sup>64</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 12.

<sup>65</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 12–4.

<sup>66</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 14.

<sup>67</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 16.

<sup>68</sup> Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath,” 17.

<sup>69</sup> For a summary of the term “Jewish Christianity,” see Paul McKechnie, “Jewish Christianity to AD 100,” in *Into All the World: Emergent Christianity in its Jewish and Greco-Roman Context*, ed. Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 134–157, here 135–8; cf. Joan E. Taylor, “The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?” *VC* 44:4 (1990): 313–34.

<sup>70</sup> Boin, “Hellenistic ‘Judaism,’” 167–96.

ed Christians as a race, or ethnic group, unique among Mediterranean peoples.<sup>71</sup> And this is a salient point in our discussion: what makes Christianity “Judaism” (*Phld.* 6.1) is what Ignatius perceives as Jewish practices like keeping the Sabbath (*Magn.* 9.1). Such people deny the flesh of Jesus, and these people, he says to the Ephesians, bear the name as a wicked deceit (*Eph.* 7.2). Instead the Ephesians are told that there is “one physician, both fleshly and spiritual, born and unborn, God come in the flesh (ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος θεός), true life in death, from both Mary and God, first subject to suffering and then beyond suffering, Jesus Christ our Lord” (*Eph.* 7.2).

In a very similar manner, the writer of 1 Timothy confesses that the “living God” “was revealed in flesh (ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί)” (1 Tim 3:7–16). Earlier in the letter, the writer, again in quasi-poetic form assures the believers in Ephesus that “there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind (ἀνθρώπων), Christ Jesus, himself human (ἄνθρωπος), who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5–6). Although we see little of the “other instruction” of the opponents in 1 Timothy, the language endorsing Jesus as truly human, who appeared in the flesh, points strongly toward a docetic understanding of Jesus by the opponents, much like Ignatius’ opponents. It is at this point that the writer of 1 Timothy and Ignatius stand furthest apart from Paul. Or perhaps we should say Pauline tradition as interpreted by some Christians. I suggest that Paul’s discussion of the flesh at the resurrection in 1 Cor 15 could be misconstrued and may have contributed to a docetic interpretation:

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven. 50 What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (1 Cor 15:42–50)

One could read this to mean that the body with which one is born cannot “inherit the kingdom of God.” Jesus was the man from heaven and was a life-giving spirit. Such an interpretation ties neatly into the docetic view as Marshall described it. The emphasis of 1 Timothy on God in the flesh (σάρξ), which elsewhere Paul equates with a sinful nature (eg Rom 7:5, 18, 25; 8:3–13), appears to be contradicting a view that the flesh is sinful, unfit for the coming age. For the writer of 1 Timothy, however, God in the flesh was vindicated in spirit, was seen

<sup>71</sup> Boin, “Hellenistic ‘Judaism,’” 184.

by angels, and was taken up in glory (1 Tim 3:16). The flesh for the writer of 1 Timothy is no barrier to Jesus carrying out his mission nor admission to “into glory,” just as it is in Ignatius’ letter to the Ephesians (*Eph.* 7.2).

It is only in Ignatius’ letter to the Ephesians that Paul’s name makes an appearance. In the New Testament literature Paul is the founding father of this church with a long standing relationship (cf. Ign. *Eph.* 12.2). On the other hand, Paul did not have such a relationship with the other churches Ignatius writes to. In Ignatius’ *Ephesians*, Paul is described in superlative fashion as “the holy one who received a testimony and proved worthy of all [blessedness]” (*Eph.* 12.2). For Ignatius Paul is the ideal apostle who is holy and so can testify supremely (cf. 1 Tim 2:7) and is blessed supremely. The true Christian adheres “to the faith and love that are in Jesus Christ” (*Eph.* 14.1; cf. 1 Tim 6:3). Since the divine prophets “lived according to Jesus Christ” (*Magn.* 8.2) and the faithful Christian adheres to the faith and love in Jesus Christ, thus Paul, the supreme Christian, must for Ignatius also live “according to Jesus Christ” and not according to Judaism.

It thus appears that Ignatius is reshaping the image of Paul as the superlative Christian in the new race that he is fashioning. Salvation and eternal life, as he says in Ephesians, raises from the very being of “our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary according to the plan of God; he was from the seed of David, but also from the Holy Spirit” (18.2). While Jesus may have what looks like Jewish roots “from the seed of David,” Ignatius will be pleased:

if the Lord shows me that all of you to a person are gathering together one by one in God’s grace, in one faith and in Jesus Christ – who is from the race of David according to the flesh (τῷ κατὰ σάρκα), and is both son of man and son of God – so that you may obey the bishop and the presbytery [...] breaking one bread, which is a medicine that brings immortality, an antidote that allows us not to die but to live at all times in Jesus Christ. (*Eph.* 20.2)

Christians are a new race, who are not connected in the flesh to the Jewish race as Jesus is, but through obedience to the bishop and presbytery and in the practice of “breaking one bread” they will not die but live “in Jesus Christ.” It is the practice of “breaking bread” that is the medicine that brings immortality (as we might deduce from Phrygian Eutyches’ epitaph). At this point one might think that Ignatius would allude to Paul’s tradition of breaking bread in 1 Corinthians since he comes close to quoting 1 Cor 1:20 at the start of this section (Ign. *Eph.* 18.1). Yet in the course of Ignatius’ argument Paul’s Jewish identity and his tradition look irrelevant. This new race of Christians for Ignatius is rooted in Jesus Christ and his flesh and joined to him through a mystical union of breaking bread.



### 4.3 Paul in the Story of Thecla in the Acts of Paul

When we shift our focus to the east of Asia Minor a different Paul appears. As indicated at the beginning of the paper, the name Paul occurs on epitaphs all over the region of Lycaonia. Cilliers Breytenbach concluded that it exceeded all other Christian names in this region.<sup>72</sup> A memory of Paul and his tradition were firmly planted in the church, judging by the epigraphic and documentary evidence. As we already have suggested, this could stem from the work of the historical Paul during his visits there. The primary document we are going to consider is the *Acts of Paul*, which contains the story of Thecla. Thecla's story is set in Iconium and Syrian Antioch and it is possible that these stories circulated independently.<sup>73</sup>

The first thing we need to establish is whether the story of Thecla as it is preserved in the *Acts of Paul* is from that region. The first mention that we have of the *Acts of Paul* comes from Tertullian in his homily *On Baptism*, written around the turn of the third century.<sup>74</sup> Tertullian is arguing that women should not baptise (chapter 17). He makes the case that the bishop has the right and so do elders, deacons and laymen if they are delegated the right by the bishop. However, baptism by these men should only be conducted in the most extraordinary circumstances since "emulation of the episcopal office is the mother of schisms."<sup>75</sup> He reasons that if a woman cannot teach neither should she baptise. In this polemical context, he dismisses the *Acts of Paul* as not authoritative because some "claim Thecla's example as a licence for women's teaching and baptizing." It would appear that some women in some parts of the African church were doing these duties. Tertullian's response is that this work did not possess apostolic authority because it was written by a presbyter in Asia, "who composed that writing, as if he were augmenting Paul's fame from his own store, after being convicted, and confessing that he had done it from love of Paul." This presbyter was convicted and removed from his office. The practice of Paul in the *Acts of Paul* did not match with what Tertullian knew about women's conduct in

<sup>72</sup> Cilliers Breytenbach, "Authority and Identity in Emerging Christianities in Asia Minor and Greece," in *Authority and Identity in Emerging Christianities in Asia Minor and Greece*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Julien M. Ogereau, AJEC (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 144–67, here 160–1.

<sup>73</sup> Chapter 4 of the *Acts of Paul* the original story is about "a marriage-rejecting virgin" expanded by the writer to integrate it into his narrative (chapter 3): Pervo, *The Acts of Paul*, chapter 3; MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*, 18–33; Philipp Pilhofer, "Die Löwen der Berge: Lebendige, steinerne und literarische Löwen im Rauhen Kilikien," in *Authority and Identity in Emerging Christianities in Asia Minor and Greece*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Julien M. Ogereau (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 193–4 n. 124.

<sup>74</sup> Earnest Evans, ed. and trans., *Tertullian's Homily On Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1965), xi; Pervo argues that he knew of the complete Acts not just the story of Thecla, *The Acts of Paul*, introduction.

<sup>75</sup> *On Baptism* from New Advent website: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0321.htm>.

1 Cor 14:34–35, which he quotes, and 1 Tim 2:12, which he alludes to. The question that needs to be answered is whether this work did originate in Asia.

We do have preserved on papyri the remains of the *Acts of Paul*. There are 4 fragments preserved that are written in Greek.<sup>76</sup> There are also near complete copies in Coptic, as well as fragments.<sup>77</sup> So popular was this work that it was translated into numerous ancient languages.<sup>78</sup> There is enough evidence for scholars to conclude that parts of what we now have as the *Acts of Paul* circulated as separate documents.<sup>79</sup> However, MacDonald's argument is that the Thecla portion is derived from oral traditions circulating in Asia Minor before they were composed into a literary unit that Tertullian knew in Africa. The epigraphic evidence supports this.<sup>80</sup> The overwhelming number of instances of "Thecla" as a name come from Cilicia and Isauria, followed closely by Lycaonia and then Phrygia and Galatia. Of course, this might be an indication of the popularity of a name favoured by the inhabitants; however, nearly all the epitaphs from Cilicia and Isauria have a cross engraved next to the inscription. Some of these Theclas are accompanied by male Christian names: John (SEG 40:1310) at Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos; Peter (MAMA III 664), and a Paul and Thecla (CIG 9223).<sup>81</sup> There is a similar pattern in Lycaonia. A Thecla Lilaina was a "slave of Christ" (MAMA VII 104) and a Thecla from Laodicea Combusta had a relative, who was a presbyter (MAMA I 231). This evidence strongly

<sup>76</sup> Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Pap. bil. 1, pp. 1–11 (3rd/4th c. CE.); P. Oxy xiii.1602 (4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> c. CE); Mich. inv. 1317 (3rd/4<sup>th</sup> c. CE), P. Mich. inv. 3788, P. Berol. 13893 (3rd/4th c. CE); George D. Kilpatrick and C. H. Roberts, "The Acta Pauli: A New Fragment," *JTS* 47:187/188 (1946): 196–9, here n. 1; William Ramsay notes a report that there were 8–9 manuscripts in the monastery at Mount Sinai, *The Church in the Roman Empire before A. D. 170* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893), 376, n.

<sup>77</sup> Cologne, Bodmer Library, P. Bodmer XLI (4th c. CE) ~ ep. 9; Manchester, John Rylands Library, Copt. Suppl. 44 (4th c. CE) ~ ep. 1; Heidelberg, Universität Heidelberg, inv. Kopt. 300&301; London, British Library, Or. 6943(19) (6<sup>th</sup> c. CE); for a complete bibliography see North American Society for the Study of Christian Apocryphal Literature website: <https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/acts-of-paul/>.

<sup>78</sup> Syriac: Catherine Burris, "The Reception of the Acts of Thecla in Syriac Christianity: Translation, Collection, and Reception" (PhD diss., Chapel Hill, 2011); Arabic: Stephen J. Davis, "From Women's Piety to Male Devotion: Gender Studies, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, and the Evidence of an Arabic Manuscript," *HTR* 108:4 (2015): 579–93; Latin, Armenian, and Slavonic, Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, 376.

<sup>79</sup> "Three components enjoyed separate existence," Pervo, *The Acts of Paul*, "Introduction"; an expanded work, Benjamin Edsall, "(Not) Baptizing Thecla: Early Interpretive Efforts on 1 Cor 1:17," *VC* 71.3 (2017): 235–60, fn. 18.

<sup>80</sup> As indicated by a search in the PHI Greek Inscriptions database 33 matches for Asia Minor. In comparison there are 15 Thecla's listed in the PHI Greek Inscriptions database for Egypt. Crosses are inscribed on most of these epitaphs. One Thecla is named before 250 CE in the papyri P.Oxy 12 1464 (*Sel. Pap.* II 318).

<sup>81</sup> A sanctuary existed for Thecla at Seleukeia on Kalykadnos, Pilhofer, "Die Löwen der Berge," 193.

suggests that "Thecla," as a Christian name, was inspired by the legendary Thecla, whom we read about in the *Acts of Paul*.

Paul, in the *Acts of Paul*, preaches a message that is very reminiscent of the message of the opponents in the Pastoral Epistles and the letters of Ignatius.<sup>82</sup> The story of Thecla (*Acts of Paul* 3–4) begins with Paul fleeing Syrian Antioch to Iconium (3:1).<sup>83</sup> This story bears only marginal similarities to the journey of Paul in Acts (13:50–14:1). In Acts Paul is accompanied by Barnabas and they are persecuted by "the Jews" in Antioch (Acts 13:45, 50) and "unbelieving Jews" in Iconium (Acts 14:2). In the story of Thecla, Jews do not appear. The persecution is carried out by her own family and by the gentile authorities. Instead of Barnabas, Paul is accompanied by two hypocrites, who act as if they love him but "this was pure deceit" (3:1), much like the opponents in 1 Timothy.<sup>84</sup> Onesiphorus offers Paul hospitality, having been told his physical description by Titus (3:2). Onesiphorus does not appear in Acts, but a disciple with the same name appears in 2 Timothy (4:19). It is perhaps to be taken that this Onesiphorus is from Iconium since Paul remembers the persecution he experienced in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra (2 Tim 3:11). Titus in the Pastorals is also Paul's faithful emissary (2 Tim 4:10; Tit 1:4). It is somewhat perplexing that it is Titus in the *Acts of Paul* and not Timothy, who in Acts is a resident of Lystra, Lycaonia. Syrian Antioch is the geographical locus, as Onesiphorus sets out toward Lystra, which is in the opposite direction to the way Paul would be travelling if he were to flee from Pisidian Antioch.<sup>85</sup> Only in the story of Thecla do we have a physical description of Paul; Onesiphorus sees Paul approaching who is "short, bald, bow-legged, healthy-looking, single-browed, a bit of long nose, and bustling with beneficence" (3.3). He at times looked like "a mortal and at others like an angel."

Paul is welcomed into Onesiphorus' house where he preaches a sermon with thirteen points (3:5). This sermon is styled like Jesus' sermon on the mount: "blessed are they ..." is the refrain. Of interest to us is the emphasis on purity of the flesh (point two). They are blessed who are self-controlled because God will speak to them; and blessed are they who have kissed the world goodbye (points three and four). The next point is about sexual renunciation in marriage – "blessed are they who have wives but do not have sexual relations with them, for they will be heirs of God." And point 13, the most significant of all is "blessed are the bodies of virgins, for they will please God and not lose the reward for chastity for the Father's word will become saving action for them on the day of his son

<sup>82</sup> Translations by Pervo, *The Acts of Paul*.

<sup>83</sup> The reader of the canonical Acts 14 would presume Paul is fleeing from Pisidian Antioch, but in the previous chapter of *The Acts of Paul*, Paul is stoned in Syrian Antioch, Pervo, *The Acts of Paul*, 84–5, 90–1.

<sup>84</sup> Kidson, *Persuading Shipwrecked Men*, 264–6.

<sup>85</sup> An oddity noted by Breytenbach and Zimmermann, *Early Christianity*, 72; see Pervo's discussion on the attempt to add clarity to Paul's journey by calling this road the "the King's Highway," 90–1.

and they will enjoy eternal rest.” The emphasis on sexual renunciation by Paul is diametrically opposed to the Paul of the Pastoral Epistles.<sup>86</sup>

The heroine Thecla hears Paul preaching and sees “any number of women and girls arriving to see Paul.” The emphasis is on Paul’s relationship with women – he has a charismatic magnetism. Thecla becomes a teacher and a missionary; she baptises herself and is martyred twice! This stands in contrast to the carefully negotiated activity of women in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 2:9–15; 5:1–16; Tit 2:3–5). Paul and Thecla travel together. They are able to do this without any hint of impropriety because of Paul’s ascetic message. He spends most of his time healing and preaching. In many ways the image of Paul in the *Acts of Paul* is much like Jesus in the gospels. But in spite of this, Paul is not presented as “Jewish.” Neither is he a teacher of the Scriptures, as he is in the Pastoral Epistles. There are no Jewish opponents or any opponents other than gentile unbelievers. Certainly, there are no critical Christian voices, only Thecla’s pagan mother, who objects to her vow of chastity: “Burn this enemy of matrimony in the middle of the theatre,” she cries (3:20).<sup>87</sup> True spirituality lies in renunciation. Virgins are especially blessed. Thecla receives an amazing salvation from the Lord, which we are to take to be related to her continued virginity and refusal of wealth. Those who revere God will become God’s angels, says Paul in his sermon (3:5–6). And indeed, Thecla in the arena has a vision of Paul as the Lord, who then ascends into heaven (3:21–22). This may hint at an underlying docetism. However, later in chapter 10 (3 Corinthians), docetism is explicitly rejected in Paul’s correspondence with the Corinthians.<sup>88</sup> Paul may be preaching sexual renunciation but his Christology is “orthodox” if we use Ignatius as a guide. Given the possibility that 3 Corinthians was inserted into the *Acts of Paul*, this could be an attempt to redeem a much beloved story for those holding an orthodox Christology.<sup>89</sup>

In summary, Paul’s physical presence in the *Acts of Paul* looms large. One can conclude from the epigraphical evidence that the memory of his presence and ministry in Lycaonia was significant. Paul’s tradition in *Acts of Paul* is an ascetic one. It is in Thecla’s story that Paul’s Jewishness is completely stripped away. In fact, no Jews are present in Thecla’s story at all, although they later appear in the story in Tyre (7.1) and Jerusalem (8).<sup>90</sup> It is in the section on Paul’s visit to Jerusalem that his Jewish identity comes back into view. Unfortunately, the

<sup>86</sup> Kidson, “Fasting, Bodily Care,” 202–5.

<sup>87</sup> The hypocrites Demas and Hermogenes (3.1) act as foils for Paul’s graciousness.

<sup>88</sup> What is now called 3 Corinthians is the two letter correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians with accompanying narrative. This correspondence did circulate independently (P.Heid has both the letters and the narrative), and appears to have had a life of its own before its incorporation into the *Acts of Paul*, Pervo, *The Acts of Paul*, 253–5.

<sup>89</sup> Benjamin L. White, *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 108–9.

<sup>90</sup> Jews as the first to receive the prophets in 3 Corinthians (10.4.9).

manuscript evidence is very damaged but there is mention of Moses, and Paul may be saying that he has submitted to the Torah. What we can conclude, I think, is that in Lycaonia Paul is remembered for being an ascetic and leading a movement of a new humanity, who transcend their earthly lives.

## 5. The Vanishing Point of Paul's Jewishness in Lycaonia

In 374 CE Amphilochius the Younger arrived in Iconium to take up the position of bishop. He was an ascetic but "orthodox."<sup>91</sup> What Amphilochius found, especially in Isauria, were churches that he did not believe conformed to orthodox practices as he understood them. The main point of contention for Amphilochius was the recognition of the baptism of schismatic groups such as Novatians, Montanists, and "encratites."<sup>92</sup> Amphilochius had discovered that the Council of Laodicea had recognised the baptism of "encratites." Amphilochius' mentor Basil of Caesarea had initially agreed with the council ruling since they baptised in the name of the Trinity, but later his attitude hardened and said that "they abominate marriage, reject wine, and claim that God's creation is pollution."<sup>93</sup> It might come as a surprise that the ascetic bishops, Basil and Amphilochius, found fault with the ascetic "encratites." Fortunately for us Amphilochius left a treatise, "Against False Asceticism," dealing with the problematic practices of the schismatics. At the centre of the problem was the issue of taking wine and bread at the Eucharist; the encratists used water.<sup>94</sup> In the *Acts of Paul*, Paul celebrated the "holy deeds of Christ" with water outside of Iconium (3.25). Secondly, they not only renounced marriage but "call the fathers that begat them adulterers, and consider their mothers prostitutes" [6].<sup>95</sup> Amphilochius ties the schismatic practices to "Samaritans," who are "keepers of the Law," and Jews, whose Jesus censured for not honouring their parents [6].<sup>96</sup> Virginity is "a marvellous thing" says Amphilochius, but the schismatics "remove honourable marriage" (Or. II, §1, ll. 1).<sup>97</sup> Similarly, the prohibition of marriage is the core of the problem in 1 Timothy. Virgins were to be found in the church in Ephesus but were to be kept by their family (1 Tim 5:11–16).<sup>98</sup> Further, Pastoral Paul urges Timothy to "no longer drink only water, but take a little wine" (1 Tim

<sup>91</sup> Peter Thonemann, "Amphilochius of Iconium and Lycaonian Asceticism," *JRS* 101 (2011): 185–205, here 86–7.

<sup>92</sup> Thonemann, "Amphilochius," 188.

<sup>93</sup> Thonemann, "Amphilochius," 188.

<sup>94</sup> Thonemann, "Amphilochius," 197.

<sup>95</sup> Thonemann, "Amphilochius," 193.

<sup>96</sup> Tran. Andrew S. Jacobs, "Amphilochus of Iconium," *Against Heretics*: <http://andrewjacobs.org/translations/asceticism.html>.

<sup>97</sup> Thonemann, "Amphilochius," 193–4.

<sup>98</sup> Kidson, "Fasting, Bodily Care," 202–4.

5:23); in the light of the *Acts of Paul* and Amphilochius this perhaps should be read as an instruction to use wine at the Lord's supper. Amphilochius argues that Paul did not keep to any such practices since he went into Onesiphorus' house and shared all the vessels [*Haer.* 18]. He uses the story of Thecla to argue against the "Jewish" tradition of the schismatics! Paul is no longer Jewish but holds to the tradition of the apostles [*Haer.* 20].

## 6. Conclusion

The evidence we have gained from the Pastoral Epistles and Ignatius is that Paul's memory and tradition was highly contested in Asia Minor after his death. Those practices that the writer of 1 Timothy and Ignatius rejected were labelled as "Jewish" and Paul's identity as a Jew was carefully brushed into the background. Even more starkly, Paul's identity in the story of Thecla is stripped of its Judaism; instead he becomes a universal man. He is almost indistinguishable from Jesus, who also lacks any Jewish identifiers. What can we deduce about Paul's Jewish identity in Lycaonia? Was it viewed as a liability in the contest with those like the writer of 1 Timothy and Ignatius who labelled their practices as "Jewish"? Or was it irrelevant since Paul was the universal man? The writer of 1 Timothy could not escape Paul's Jewish identity as he and his audience had, at least, a copy of the Corinthian correspondence. Perhaps the believers in the remote highlands of Lycaonia were without this resource and relied on their received tradition. What we can conclude is that in Asia Minor Paul's Jewish identity had to be managed, if not jettisoned altogether. For many, Paul was not Jewish but a universal man; his asceticism a sign of a new humanity that was destined for a spiritual existence without worldly flesh. All our writers seem to distance themselves from Judaism. In many ways they share a lot of common ground. But the writer of the Pastorals and Ignatius do not share in the Christology of their opponents and in this reflect a Pauline view of Christ. However, Paul's nuanced arguments on the identity of gentile and Jewish believers "in Christ" and the resurrected flesh seem to become liabilities for later believers.<sup>99</sup> His subtle negotiations, so evident in his letters, collapse in the torrid contest over his memory and tradition in Asia Minor.

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<sup>99</sup> On Paul's negotiation of his Jewish identity as a convert to Christ see Steven J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church* (London; New York: Bloomsbury 2005), 26–9; on the difficulties of Paul's discussion on the resurrected flesh see James D. G. Dunn, "How Are the Dead Raised? With What Body Do They Come?: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 15," *SWJT* 45:1 (2002): 4–18.



# The Heresiological Portrayals of the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans and Their Reception of Paul

Michael Kok

## 1. Introduction

In their monographs surveying the reception of the “Apostle to the Gentiles” among Jewish interpreters in the pre-modern and modern eras, Daniel R. Langton and John G. Gager agree that the vast majority of Jews over the last two millennia have not had any familiarity with the contents of Paul’s letters, much less vilified their author.<sup>1</sup> Langton concludes that “[t]he truth is that until relatively recent times Jewish treatments of Christianity have very rarely mentioned Paul, the focus of attention and hostility having been Jesus until the time of the Enlightenment and Emancipation.”<sup>2</sup> Gager concurs that Jewish scholars rarely polemicized against Paul before the nineteenth century, so “[t]he idea of a centuries-long, unbroken chain of anti-Pauline writings among Jews just doesn’t exist.”<sup>3</sup>

The increasing Jewish engagement with the Pauline Epistles coincided with certain developments in Protestant scholarship on Paul. Ferdinand Christian Baur and the Tübingen School positioned “Pauline Christianity” as the antithesis of “Jewish Christianity.”<sup>4</sup> In characterizing Paul as a critic of legalism or ethnocentrism, some supporters of the Old and New Perspectives on Paul may

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<sup>1</sup> See Daniel R. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23–31; John G. Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity? The Jewish Lives of the Apostle Paul* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 39–45.

<sup>2</sup> Langton, *The Apostle Paul*, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Gager, *Whom Made Early Christianity*, 39.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, see Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen: L. Fr. Fues, 1853), 41–158. For the continuing influence of Baur’s approach to Christian origins, see Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Judenthum und Judenchristenthum: eine Nachlese zu der “Ketzer Geschichte des Urchristenthums”* (Tübingen: L. Fr. Fues, 1886); Gerd Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity*, trans. M.E. Boring (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Michael D. Goulder, *St. Peter versus St. Paul: A Tale of Two Missions* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995). For early criticisms of Baur, see Albrecht Ritschl, *Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche: Eine kirchen und dogmengeschichtliche Monographie* (Bonn: Adolf Marcus, 1850); Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *The Epistles of St. Paul: II. The Third Apostolic Journey 3. Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan and co, 1896), 311–45.



have caricatured Paul's Jewish contemporaries.<sup>5</sup> Some scholars advocating for the "Paul within Judaism" approach, on the other hand, are involved in the intramural Jewish conversation about Paul's legacy. This perspective has been shaped by the significant contributions of Jewish biblical scholars such as Mark Nanos,<sup>6</sup> Pamela Eisenbaum,<sup>7</sup> and Paula Fredriksen.<sup>8</sup> It re-envisioned Paul as a *Torah*-observant, Second Temple Jew whose prophetic vocation was to summon non-Jews to repent and commit their allegiance to the god of Israel and Jesus the Messiah.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, there were Jewish Christ followers, or "Ebionites," who maligned Paul for his alleged antinomianism long before the nineteenth century (cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.2; Origen, *Hom. Jer.* 19.12; *Cels.* 5.65; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.27.4; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.16.8–9; Jerome, *Comm Matt.* 12.2).<sup>10</sup> In Baur's model of Christian origins, their anti-Paulinism was in continuity with the opposition that Paul faced in Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, in his catalogue of eighty sectarian groups, Epiphanius insisted that the Ebionites were an offshoot of the "Nazoraeans" (Ναζωραῖοι; cf. *Pan.* 30.1.1),<sup>12</sup> Jewish believers in Christ who

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of scholarship on Paul's relationship with "Judaism" from a proponent of the "Paul within Judaism" approach, see Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholars* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> See Mark Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); idem., *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002); idem., *Reading Paul within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 1* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017); idem., *Reading Romans within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 2* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018); idem., *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 4* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> See Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> See Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Several essays presented at the "Paul within Judaism" section at the *Society of Biblical Literature* have been compiled together by Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm. See Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Langton and Gager devote only a few pages to the Jewish Christ associations during the Patristic period in their surveys. See Langton, *The Apostle Paul*, 24–5 n. 10; Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity*, 99–100.

<sup>11</sup> Baur, *Das Christentum*, 85–93, 172–4; Hilgenfeld, *Judenthum*, 52–122; Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte Des Judentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 199), 256–305; Idem., *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church*, trans. Douglas A. Hare (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 18–37; Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 172–83; Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, 31–2; 196, 198–9; Goulder, *St. Peter versus St. Paul*, 107–13; Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects and Gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 23–4, 47–9.

<sup>12</sup> "Nazarene" (Ναζαρηνός; cf. Mark 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6; Luke 4:34; 24:19) and "Nazoraeans" (Ναζωραῖος; cf. Matt 2:23; 26:7; Luke 18:37; John 18:5, 7; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9) are attested in the New Testament. Epiphanius characterizes the "Nazoraeans" (Ναζωραῖοι) as a Jewish sect of Christ followers, who should be distinguished from the

seemingly approved of the same creedal formulations and canonical books that he did (29.7.2–5, but cf. 7.6; 9.4). Their canon may have included Paul's letters (29.7.2; cf. Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 9.1). Several scholars are convinced that this group's history stretched back to the apostolic era, for Paul was accused of being one of their ringleaders (Acts 24:5).<sup>13</sup>

Due to space considerations, I will concentrate on select Patristic testimonies about the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans. The heresiologists' portrayals of the Ebionites and Nazoraeans as sects may be misleading. What their data may show is that Jewish Christ followers during the Patristic period generally perceived Paul to have been an antinomian figure. Many of them may have held that Jesus was qualified for his messianic office due to his obedience to the Sinaitic covenantal stipulations and that his disciples, Jews and non-Jews alike, ought to imitate his example. Be that as it may, some Jewish Christ followers, at least by the fourth century, esteemed the Pauline Epistles as authoritative writings and managed to reconcile their interpretation of them with their covenantal nomism.

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"Nazirites" (Ναζιραῖοι) who are consecrated for the service of God and the "Nasareans" (Νασαραῖοι) as a pre-Christian sect (cf. *Pan.* 29.5.7; 29.6.1). Jerome uses the terms *Nazaraei* (= Ναζωραῖοι) and *Nazareni* (= Ναζαρηῖνοι) interchangeably and other variant spellings are attested in the manuscript tradition. For further discussion about the nomenclature, see R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 11–8, 45–7; Simon Claude Mimouni, "Les Nazoréens Recherche Étymologique Et Historique" *RB* 105:2 (1998), 216–60; Martinus C. de Boer, "The Nazoreans: Living at the Boundary of Judaism and Christianity" in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 253 n. 1; Wolfram Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans" in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 468–71; Edwin K. Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus: Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity*, WUNT 266 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 163, 163 n. 2; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 51–3; Andrew Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 292–3.

<sup>13</sup> See Ritschl, *Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*, 152–(154), 171; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 318, 317–8 n. 3; Jean Danielou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine: Volume 1 The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, ed. and trans. John A. Baker (London and Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 56; Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 14–7, 39, 75; de Boer, "The Nazoreans," 243–5, 252; Richard Bauckham, "The Origin of the Ebionites" in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, WUNT 158, ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 162–3; Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 156–7; Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans," 481; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 163, 178–9, 186; Simon Claude Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity: Historical Essays*, trans. Robyn Fréchet (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 63–6.

## 2. The Oldest Patristic Testimonies about the Ebionites

The heresiological sources should be handled with caution. Not only were the heresiologists polemical and tendentious, but they also tended to paint the targets of their opprobrium along the lines of philosophical schools, often named after their founders, which had distinct ideas, ethics, and rituals.<sup>14</sup> This is nowhere more evident than in the invention of Ebion, the fictive founder of the Ebionites (e.g., *Ref.* 7.35.1; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 10.8; 33.3–5, 11; *Virg.* 6.1; *Carn. Chr.* 14; 18; 24).<sup>15</sup> Instead, the Greek Ἐβιωνᾶι or Latin *Ebionaei* is a transliteration of the Aramaic form of the Hebrew plural noun for “poor ones.”

Although Paul delivered a collection of money to Jerusalem as a gift for the “poor” (πτωχοί; cf. Gal 2:10; Rom 15:26), there is no indication that the recipients of his act of charity called themselves “the poor.”<sup>16</sup> Epiphanius reproduced the information from his informant(s) that the name Ebionite harkened back to the voluntary poverty of the members of the Jerusalem Christ congregation, an explanation that he cast aside when mocking Ebion’s poor nature (*Pan.* 30.17.2–3).<sup>17</sup> Some Ebionites may have put forward this etiological exegesis of Acts 2:43–47 and 4:32–37 in response to the insulting etymologies supplied for their title by their detractors (e.g., Origen, *Cels.* 2.1; *Princ.* 4.3.8; *Comm. Matt* 16.12; *Hom. Gen.* 3.5; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.27.1, 6).<sup>18</sup> At some point, this title became a popular self-designation. Oscar Skarsaune may be right that it was picked up by a variety of Jewish Christ followers rather than by a single faction.<sup>19</sup> It either reflected their actual socio-economic status or the valorisation of poverty in the Hebrew Bible or in the sayings of Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Oskar Skarsaune, “The Ebionites” in Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 420–1.

<sup>15</sup> Hilgenfeld (*Judenthum*, 101) may be alone in accepting that Ebion was a historical figure.

<sup>16</sup> Contra Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 11, 102; Goulder, *St. Peter versus St. Paul*, 70, “A Poor Man’s Christology” *NTS* 45 (1999): 333–4; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 149; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 23. This position was refuted in Leander E. Keck, “The Poor Amongst the Saints in the New Testament” *ZNW* 56 (1965): 100–29; idem, “The Poor Amongst the Saints in Jewish Christianity and Qumran” *ZNW* 57 (1966): 54–78; cf. Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, 195, 306 n. 14; Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 178; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 425; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 188–9; James Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*, WUNT 251 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 345–6; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 289.

<sup>17</sup> Goulder (“A Poor Man’s Christology,” 332–3) and Skarsaune (“The Ebionites,” 452) regards this explanation as historically plausible.

<sup>18</sup> Keck, “The Poor Amongst the Saints in Jewish Christianity,” 59; Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 178; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 35; Paget, *Jews*, 346.

<sup>19</sup> Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 421–4.

<sup>20</sup> See Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 11, 101–2; Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 177–80; Sakari Häkkinen, “Ebionites” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heresics,”* SVC 76, ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 247;

The earliest extant references to the Ebionites are in Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*. In his first excerpt on them (*Haer.* 1.26.2), he summed up their scepticism about the virginal conception of Jesus, privileging of Matthew's Gospel to the exclusion of all other Gospels, and abhorrence for Paul as an "apostate from the law" (*apostata legis*).<sup>21</sup> For examples of how they conducted their lives in accordance with the biblical commandments and kept their Jewish customs, he specified that they expounded on the prophetic corpus, circumcised their sons, and adored Jerusalem as if it were the deity's house. This last point may imply that their prayers were directed towards Jerusalem<sup>22</sup> or that the city was central to their millenarian hopes.<sup>23</sup> Leaving aside the question over whether or not they would have agreed with Paul's standpoint on the admission requirements for non-Jews participating in the Jesus movement for the moment, this notice indicates that they were chiefly offended that Paul had garnered the (false?) reputation of encouraging his fellow Jews to follow in his footsteps in abandoning their ancestral customs (cf. Acts 21:21).<sup>24</sup>

Irenaeus neglected to explain the meaning of the Ebionites' appellation and his brief statements about them are vague and stereotypical.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that he had little firsthand knowledge about them and consulted an older heresiological catalogue.<sup>26</sup> Some scholars guess that he had an updated copy of Justin's *Syntagma against All the Heresies*,<sup>27</sup> for Justin does not list the Ebionites among his opponents (cf. *1 Apol.* 26.1–8). Despite Justin's tirades against his Jewish interlocutor Trypho, he was surprisingly tolerant of Jewish Christ followers who adhered to the Law of Moses, so long as they did not impose it on others, and of non-Jewish, Christ-following Judaizers (*Dial.* 47.1–4; contra Gal 1:8–9).<sup>28</sup> Still, he disapproved of anyone who acknowledged Jesus's messianic

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Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 421, 425–7; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 188–9; Paget, *Jews*, 344–7; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 289.

<sup>21</sup> For the text of *Haer.* 1.26.2, see Albertus F.J. Klijn and Gerrit J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 104–5.

<sup>22</sup> Schoeps, *Theologie*, 141; idem, *Jewish Christianity*, 113; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 20; Häkkinen, "Ebionites," 271; Paget, *Jews*, 357.

<sup>23</sup> Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 176–7. For further discussion of the Ebionites' possible chiliasm, see Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 379–80; Schoeps, *Theologie*, 78–89; idem, *Jewish Christianity*, 62–5.

<sup>24</sup> Bauckham, "The Origin of the Ebionites," 176; Häkkinen, "Ebionites," 270; Skarsaune, "Ebionites," 437; Paget, *Jews*, 361.

<sup>25</sup> For the Latin text, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, 195; Häkkinen, "Ebionites," 250; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 18; Paget, *Jews*, 326.

<sup>27</sup> Häkkinen, "Ebionites," 251; Paget, *Jews*, 318.

<sup>28</sup> De Boer, "The Nazoraeans," 260 n. 70; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 283; Häkkinen, "Ebionites," 249; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 18; Paget, *Jews*, 326; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 97. For this reason, Baur (*Das Christentum*, 135–140) did not think that Justin could be comfortably placed in his categories of Jewish or Pauline Christianity and Hilgenfeld (*Judentum*, 36–40) moved Justin closer to the Jewish side of the debate,

status but not his pre-existence and divinity (48.4) and, aware that some Jewish believers championed this human Christology, he put it on Trypho's lips in the *Dialogue* to refute it (e.g., 49.1; 67.2; 68.5).<sup>29</sup>

The Ebionites' fidelity to Jesus and to the *Torah* is a recurrent feature of the Patristic testimonies. They did not consider their Jewish and Christian commitments to be irreconcilable. For instance, Eusebius had an unknown source, perhaps one of Origen's lost writings, on how they commemorated the Sabbath and the Lord's Day (*Hist. eccl.* 3.27.5).<sup>30</sup> The early-third century Roman author of *The Refutation of All Heresies* represented the Ebionites as claiming "to be justified" (δικαιοῦσθαι) "according to the law of Moses" (κατὰ νόμον Μωϋσῆ; cf. 7.34.1; 10.22.1).<sup>31</sup> Whatever verdict specialists on the Pauline Epistles reach about the meaning of Paul's *dikai*-terminology or phrases such as ἔργα νόμου ("works of the law"), it is hard to not see this as an inversion of his sentiments in Gal 2:16 or Rom 3:28 (but cf. Rom 2:13). For Tertullian, Ebion's "heresy" (*haeresis*), consisting of the observance "of circumcision and the Law" (*circumcisionis et legis*), had already been discredited in Paul's epistle to the Galatians (*Praes.* 33.3–5).<sup>32</sup> It is less clear whether Tertullian was insinuating that Ebion, like Paul's opponents in Galatia, was actively ministering among non-Jews.<sup>33</sup>

Irenaeus was fixated on the Ebionites' Christology. He defended the incarnation and virginal conception of Jesus by appealing to specific biblical texts (i.e. Isa 7:14 LXX; Matt 1:23) and his theology of recapitulation (cf. 1.26.2; 3.11.7; 3.21.1; 4.33.4; 5.1.3). He compared the Ebionites' cosmology and Christology to two demiurgical thinkers named Cerinthus and Carpocrates (cf. 1.26.2). The Ebionites differed from those two in assigning the creation of the cosmos to the supreme deity rather than to an inferior divine power or to angels (1.25.1; 1.26.1). There is a text critical issue about whether his text originally stated that the Ebionites' opinions about the lord were also "not the same" (*non similiter*) as the opinions of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. The author of the *Refutation* omitted

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but Ritschl (*Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*, 298–311) disagreed in positioning Justin as a representative of a non-Jewish Christian viewpoint. For a recent study on the tension between Justin's project of constructing a distinctive Christian identity and his concessions towards non-Jewish Judaizers in the Christ congregations, see Benjamin L. White, "Justin between Paul and the Heretics: The Salvation of Christian Judaizers in the *Dialogue with Trypho*" *J ECS* 26:2 (2018): 163–89.

<sup>29</sup> Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 429–30, 432–3.

<sup>30</sup> Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 446–7; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Sects*, 30.

<sup>31</sup> For the Greek passages in the *Refutation*, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 112–3, 120–1. See also the overview of the scholarly debate over the authorship of this text in M. David Litwa, *Refutation of All Heresies* (Atlanta: SBL, 2016), xxxii–xlii.

<sup>32</sup> Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 21; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 194. For the Latin text, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 108–9. Joseph Barber Lightfoot concurred with Tertullian's assessment in his classic commentary on Galatians (cf. *Epistle to the Galatians*, 422).

<sup>33</sup> Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 439; Paget, *Jews*, 358.

the negation before ὁμοίως (“same”) when copying Irenaeus’s Greek text (7.34.1; 10.22.1). According to Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.26.1), Cerinthus judged that Jesus was conceived in the same non-miraculous way as all humans, yet, because his righteousness, prudence, and wisdom far surpassed his peers, the Christ aeon chose to possess him at his baptism. Likewise, Irenaeus recapped Carpocrates’s teaching that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph, but an undefined power was bestowed on him due to the purity of his soul (1.25.1).<sup>34</sup>

A.F.J. Klijn and G.J. Reinink are adamant that the *non* in the Latin translation of Irenaeus’s text should be retained for the following reasons: this section focuses on the contrasting philosophies about the creator (1.25.1–26.2), it is unlikely that the Ebionites equated the spirit with the Christ aeon, and the theologians who divided the human Jesus from the divine Christ favoured Mark’s Gospel (3.11.7).<sup>35</sup> Their case is not compelling.<sup>36</sup> Irenaeus’s antecedent clause narrowed in on a major theological disagreement between the Ebionites and the demiurgical theologians, so his following clause beginning with the adversative “but” (*autem*) called attention to the similarities between their Christologies insofar as they all denied that Jesus was born to a virgin and professed that he was possessed by a spirit at his baptism. It may be more accurate to categorize the Christologies of the Ebionites, Cerinthus, and Carpocrates as “possessionist” rather than “adoptionist.”<sup>37</sup>

Yet the similarities between their possessionist Christologies are superficial. The Ebionites did not share Cerinthus’s conviction that the “Christ” was a celestial aeon sent to reveal a previously unknown, transcendent deity who was superior to the creator (1.26.1), nor Carpocrates’s viewpoint that the spiritual power revealed to Jesus the means by which he might escape the angelic creators

<sup>34</sup> This reference to the purity of Jesus’s soul challenges the uncritical acceptance of the heresiological depictions of the Carpocratians’ excessive libertinism. See Winrich Alfried Löhr, “Karpokratianisches” VC 49:1 (1995): 33. However, the Carpocratians’s rejection of the custom of monogamy, which was rooted in their radical ethic of renouncing the ownership of private property and sharing everything in common, is multiply attested (cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.28.2; Clement, *Strom.* 3.2.3.2). See Thomas J. Whitley, *The Greatest Blasphemy: Sex, Souls, and the Carpocratian Heresy* (unpublished PhD thesis, Florida State University, 2016), 107, 115.

<sup>35</sup> Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> See the criticisms of Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, 305 n.5; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 265 n.49; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 428; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Sects*, 20–1; Paget, *Jews*, 352; Michael F. Bird, *Jesus the Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 114 n.18. Broadhead (*Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 193) seems open to Klijn and Reinink’s text-critical case.

<sup>37</sup> On this point, see Goulder, *St. Peter versus St. Paul*, 110; idem, “A Poor Man’s Christology,” 335–7; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 268–9; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Sects*, 20–1, 46; Peter Ben-Smit, “The End of Early Christian Adoptionism? A Note on the Invention of Adoptionism, Its Sources, and Its Current Demise” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 76:3 (2015): 177–199, here 180–4; Bird, *Jesus the Eternal Son*, 112–20; Michael J. Kok, “Classifying Cerinthus’s Christology” *JECH* 9:1 (2019): 30–48, here 35–9.



of the world (1.25.1).<sup>38</sup> It is doubtful that the Ebionites were not cognizant of the fact that the Greek noun *χριστός* should be translated as “anointed one,” for prophets, priests, and rulers were anointed or empowered by the spirit of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>39</sup> Tertullian opined that the Ebionites’ prophetic Christology could be strengthened if they had cited Zech 1:14 LXX, for this verse has an angel speaking in the prophet (*Carn. Chr.* 14), but this does not entail that the Ebionites identified the spirit that indwelt Jesus as an angel.<sup>40</sup> Cerinthus was guided by the philosophical notion that divine beings are impassible, which is why the Christ aeon departed from Jesus before he was crucified (1.26.1), so it may be more fitting to apply the taxonomic category “separationist Christology” to his Christological beliefs.<sup>41</sup> Michael Goulder’s efforts to read back this separationist Christology back into first-century sources is not convincing.<sup>42</sup>

There is tension between Irenaeus’s assertions that the Ebionites had an exclusive preference for Matthew’s Gospel on the one hand and disputed its infancy narrative on the other. Irenaeus derided the Ebionites for overlooking how Matthew’s Gospel undermined their stance on Jesus’s biological origins (*Haer.* 3.11.7; cf. Matt 1:18–24). Noticing the problem, Eusebius switched the Gospel of Matthew with the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* (*Eccl. Hist.* 3.27.4), while Epiphanius charged the Ebionites with circulating a mutilated version of Matthew’s Gospel by removing its opening chapters (*Pan.* 30.3.7; 13.2, 6; 14.3). This issue cannot be resolved by inferring that Irenaeus was really referring to another Jewish Gospel.<sup>43</sup> He denounced the Ebionites, the spokespersons for a separationist Christology, Marcion, and Valentinus for not accepting the “four-fold gospel” (τετράμορφον εὐαγγέλιον) and appropriating the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John respectively for their own sectarian ends (*Haer.*

<sup>38</sup> See the critique of Goulder’s identification of the Ebionites’ Christology with that of Cerinthus and Carpocrates in Paget, *Jews*, 352.

<sup>39</sup> See Kok, “Classifying Cerinthus’s Christology,” 36, 39.

<sup>40</sup> Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 21; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 252–3; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 431–2; contra Bird, *Jesus the Eternal Son*, 116, 119–20.

<sup>41</sup> Kok, “Classifying Cerinthus’s Christology,” 36–9.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, Goulder (*St. Peter versus St. Paul*, 112) translates ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα in Matt 27:50 as “he let the spirit go” and, in light of Jesus’s invocation of Psalm 22:1 from the cross in 27:46, interprets it in reference to a separationist Christology. I agree with Paget (*Jews*, 353 n. 115) that “Goulder’s case is based upon often speculative mirror reading of New Testament texts, none of which is straightforwardly convincing.”

<sup>43</sup> Contra Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, “Jewish Christian Gospels” in *New Testament Apocrypha I: Gospels and Related Writings*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 136, 140–1; Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 163–4; Pier Franco Beatrice, “The ‘Gospel According to the Hebrews’ in the Apostolic Fathers” *NovT* 48:2 (2006): 147–195, here 173; James R. Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 10–2, 18–9, 26; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 386–8; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 222.

3.11.7–8). He had no other Gospel in mind besides the canonical Gospel of Matthew and Origen confirmed that the Ebionites were fond of quoting Matt 10:5–6 (*Princ.* 4.3.8) and 24–25 (*Comm. ser. Matt.* 79).<sup>44</sup>

The solution to this conundrum may be found in Origen's observations about a division between the Ebionites over the acceptance or rejection of the virginal conception of Jesus (*Cels.* 5.61; 5.65). Irenaeus presumed that Matthew's Gospel addressed a Jewish audience due to Papias's tradition that the apostle composed this work in his native language (3.1.1; cf. Papias, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16). Undoubtedly some Jewish Christ followers loved Matthew's Gospel, with its *Sondergut* about how Jesus came to fulfil rather than abolish the Law and warned against breaking the least of the commandments (Matt 5:17–20; cf. Luke 16:17). There is no hint before Epiphanius that the Ebionites cut out Matthew's genealogy and infancy narrative. I would suggest that Mark's narrative, which commences at Jesus's baptism rather than his birth, may have been the Gospel of choice for Jewish Christ followers who rejected the virgin birth. It is true that some interpreters took the descent of the spirit in Mark 1:10 and Jesus's cry of divine abandonment in Mark 15:34 as supporting a separationist Christology.<sup>45</sup> Yet Mark's baptism account could have been construed in a more traditional sense as the moment when Jesus was anointed as a messianic candidate, especially as the voice from heaven may allude to a royal Psalm about the Davidic ruler and the Isaianic servant (Mark 1:11; cf. Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1), and Jesus's recitation of Ps 22:1 in Mark 15:34 as a lament could be uttered by any righteous person. Scholars miss how amenable Mark's Gospel may have been to the Ebionites because they often interpret it as rendering the Law of Moses obsolete, in spite of the Markan Jesus's instructions to a wealthy man to obey the Decalogue (Mark 10:18) or complaint that the Pharisees were disregarding the commands for the sake of their oral traditions (7:6–8). For one case study, innumerable exegeses read Mark's parenthetical aside in 7:19b as clarifying the part of Jesus's aphorism in 7:15 (cf. 7:18–19) that nothing that enters into a person from the outside can defile him or her as, in effect, declaring all foods as permissible to eat.<sup>46</sup> In the literary context (7:1–23), though, the Jewish dietary restrictions

<sup>44</sup> Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 20, 23–4; Albertus F.J. Klijn, *Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 4; Häkkinen, "Ebionites," 260; Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 435–6, 460; Paget, *Jews*, 327, 328, 329 n.28, 352; Jörg Frey, "Die Fragmente jüdenchristlicher Evangelien," in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung. I. Band: Evangelien und Verwandtes. Teilband 1*, ed. Christoph Markschies und Jens Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012), 547–75; idem, "Die Fragmente des Ebionäerevangeliums" in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, 608; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 181.

<sup>45</sup> See Michael J. Kok, *The Gospel on the Margins: The Reception of Mark in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 243–5.

<sup>46</sup> See the long list of scholars who support this traditional reading footnoted in John van Maaren, "Does Mark's Jesus Abrogate Torah? Jesus' Purity Logion and its Illustration in Mark 7:15–23" *JJMJS* 4 (2017): 21–41, here 23–4 n.5.



would have been taken for granted by all of the Jewish participants in the debate. Jesus was repudiating the Pharisees' extra-biblical tradition that impurity can be transmitted from the hands via a liquid to the eater, thus "cleansing all foods" (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα) that were thought to be contaminated by unwashed hands.<sup>47</sup>

Petri Luomanen has another hypothesis for why Origen deduced that there were two schools of the Ebionites. He conjectures that Origen had access to the Greek text of the *Refutation* and the Latin translation of *Against Heresies* that differed over whether the Ebionites' opinions about Jesus were similar or dissimilar to the ideas of Cerinthus and Carpocrates, so he supposed that the Ebionites who denied the virgin birth were the referent of the former text and the Ebionites who affirmed it were the referent of the latter.<sup>48</sup> Origen may have drawn on Irenaeus for his information that both groups of Ebionites despised Paul (*Cels.* 5.65; cf. *Hom. Jer.* 19.12), since this point is not explicit in the *Refutation*.<sup>49</sup> Luomanen highlights the linguistic parallels between Origen's description of the Ebionites (*Cels.* 5.61) and the description of Cerinthus in the *Refutation* (7.33.1), including that Jesus was born "like the other people" (ὡς τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀνθρώπους) or "similar to all other people" (ὁμοίως τοῖς λοιποῖς ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις) and not "of a virgin" (ἐκ παρθένου).<sup>50</sup> The latter text, Luomanen avers, further conformed its description of the Ebionites to that of Cerinthus, for the Ebionites' insistence of the necessity "to be justified according to the law" (κατὰ νόμον [...] δικαιῶσθαι) in 7.34.1 echoes Cerinthus's declaration that Jesus was "more righteous" or "just" (δικαιότερος) than other people in 7.33.1.<sup>51</sup>

This last parallel between the views of Cerinthus and the Ebionites in *Refutation* 7.33.1 and 7.34.1 may be stretched. Cerinthus did not reckon that Jesus was righteous or just according to the standards of the Mosaic Law and the Ebionites did not distinguish between the human Jesus and the divine Christ. Even assuming that Origen had a Greek text of the *Refutation* and a Latin text of *Against Heresies* with the textual variant at 1.26.2 in front of him, which is far from certain, he may have presumed that *non similiter* implied that the Ebionites did not entertain Cerinthus's and Carpocrates's opinions about Jesus being

<sup>47</sup> James G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity*, LNTS 266 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 191–204; Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 102–28; Van Maaren, "Does Mark's Jesus Abrogate Torah," 26–40.

<sup>48</sup> Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 19–20, 28–9. Klijn and Reinink (*Patristic Evidence*, 26) had an identical hypothesis for why Eusebius assumed that there were two kinds of Ebionites (*Eccl. Hist.* 3.27.3).

<sup>49</sup> Petri Luomanen, "The Nazarenes: Orthodox Heretics with an Apocryphal Canonical Gospel?" in *The Other Side: Apocryphal Perspectives on Ancient Christian "Orthodoxies,"* NTOA 117, ed. Candida R. Moss, Tobias Nicklas, Christopher Tuckett, and Joseph Verheyden (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 68.

<sup>50</sup> Luomanen, "The Nazarenes," 68–9.

<sup>51</sup> Luomanen, "The Nazarenes," 68–9.

temporarily inhabited by a celestial Christ aeon.<sup>52</sup> After all, Irenaeus condemned the Ebionites for disavowing the virgin birth at other points in his heresiological treatise (3.21.1; 5.1.3). The flaw in Luomanen's hypothesis is that there is not a single passage in *Against Heresies* or the *Refutation* disclosing that there were any Ebionites who accepted the virgin birth, so Origen would have no basis in either text to invent a second group of Ebionites who did so. It seems more likely that Origen obtained his information about the Ebionites, from the meaning of their sobriquet to their varying Christologies, independently from Irenaeus through his personal contacts with Jewish Christ followers.<sup>53</sup>

There may be more merit to Luomanen's argument that Eusebius did not have any independent knowledge about the two types of Ebionites apart from Origen (cf. *Eccl. Hist.* 3.37.3). His additional point that not even the second group of Ebionites confessed Jesus's divinity as the pre-existent word or wisdom of the deity may have depended on Origen's similar contention about the Ebionites and the Valentinians (cf. *Comm. Tit.* 3.11), which may be grounded in nothing more than the supposition that aberrant Christologies consistently deviated from the Christology of the Johannine Prologue (cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.11.3).<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Eusebius was the first to label the biblical translator Symmachus as an Ebionite. This assumption was based on the appearance of "young woman" (νεᾱνίς) in Symmachus's translation of Isaiah 7:14 and commentaries where he may have defended his translation choices (*Eccl. Hist.* 5.17; *Dem. Ev.* 7.1; cf. Jerome, *Comm. Hab.* 3.10–13; *de vir il.* 54). His characterization of Symmachus as an Ebionite who was critical of Matthew's proof-texting of Isa 7:14 LXX can be accounted for by recognizing that he employed the term Ebionite for all Jewish believers in Christ.<sup>55</sup> Yet Symmachus may not have been a Christian at all.<sup>56</sup>

The Ebionites's Christology, soteriology, and ethics were interconnected. Before Irenaeus, Trypho objected that it would be more reasonable for Christians to believe that Jesus was elected to be the Messiah due to his perfect obedience to the commandments (cf. *Dial.* 67.2; 67.5, 6, 46–49).<sup>57</sup> In *Against Heresies* 1.26.2, Irenaeus inferred that the Ebionites agreed with Cerinthus to the extent that Jesus was an ordinary human who was exalted to a higher status as a reward

<sup>52</sup> See Paget's counterargument that Origen did not impute Cerinthus's key distinction between the human Jesus and the divine Christ to Cerinthus (cf. *Jews*, 356 n. 137).

<sup>53</sup> Häkkinen, "Ebionites," 254–5; Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 445; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 195; Paget, *Jews*, 328, 35.

<sup>54</sup> Luomanen, "The Nazarenes," 70–2; cf. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 27; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> Häkkinen, "Ebionites," 261.

<sup>56</sup> Contra Schoeps, *Theologie*, 33–7, 350–80; Idem, *Jewish Christianity*, 15, 31, 65, 72 n. 18, 80–1, 84, 93, 114; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 54; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 233; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 233–5. See Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 448–9; Paget, *Jews*, 359–60.

<sup>57</sup> Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 440–1.

for his righteous behaviour. The author of the *Refutation* built on Irenaeus's testimony in 7.34.1–2 by declaring Jesus "to have been justified by doing the law" (δεδικαιῶσθαι ποιήσαντα τον νόμον). Indeed, anyone who acts in the same way as Jesus is able "to become anointed ones" (γενέσθαι χριστούς). An *imitatio Christi* theme undergirds this passage.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, Edwin K. Broadhead underscores that the citation of Matthew 10:24–25 as a proof-text for why the disciples of Jesus must imitate their teacher (Pseudo-Tertullian, *adv. omn. Haer.* 3; Origen, *in Matt. comm. ser.* 79; Pseudo-Hieronymus, *indic. de haer.* 10; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 28.5.1; 30.26.1–3; 30.33.4) is multiply attested and was a cause of embarrassment for the Patristic writers who were unable to refute the logic.<sup>59</sup> For the Ebionites censured in these passages, membership in the Sinaitic covenant and faithfulness to its terms was non-negotiable for everyone who wished to be disciples of Jesus.<sup>60</sup> Their stance was the polar opposite of Paul's stance.

### 3. Epiphanius's Innovative Portrait of the Ebionites

While the heresiological profiles of the Ebionites have seemed fairly consistent thus far, Epiphanius drastically altered the picture of them in the thirtieth chapter of his *Panarion*.<sup>61</sup> The proposals that Jesus was born from Joseph's "seed" (σπέρμα; cf. *Pan.* 30.2.2; 3.1; 16.3) and that the spirit descended on him at his baptism (30.3.6; 13.7; 14.4; 16.3) sounds like Irenaeus's Ebionites, but Epiphanius created confusion in treating the names Jesus and "Christ" as interchangeable on the one hand and mixing up the spirit with Cerinthus's Christ aeon on the other. What is more, he described the Ebionites' Christ as an archangel who rules over creation, as a being of gigantic proportions, and as the original human Adam or a pre-existent spirit who has been reincarnated in several bodies since Adam (30.3.3–6; 16.4; 17.6–7). In another section, Jesus is envisaged as Moses's prophetic successor (30.18.4–5). As for the Ebionites' praxis, he reaffirmed their adherence to the Jewish Law, singling out customs like circumcision and the Sabbath (30.2.2; 17.5; 26.1–2). He scorned their post-baptismal ritual immersions (30.2.4–5; 15.3; 16.1), vegetarianism (30.13.5; 15.3–4; 18.7; 22.4), forbiddance of celibacy and allowance of remarriage (30.2.6; 18.2–3), and dismissal of the Hebrew prophets as well as the passages in the Pentateuch pertaining to the sacrificial cult (30.15.2; 16.5, 7; 18.4–5, 7–9). The premise that false pericopes were interpolated into the Pentateuch, especially the directives to offer animal

<sup>58</sup> Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 439; Paget, *Jews*, 358.

<sup>59</sup> Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 211.

<sup>60</sup> Schoeps, *Theologie*, 135–43; Idem, *Jewish Christianity*, 75; Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 439–40; Paget, *Jews*, 358.

<sup>61</sup> Although some parts of *Pan.* 30 are not reproduced (e.g., 30.3.8–12.10), much of the Greek text can be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 174–193.

sacrifices, may have had a long pre-history or may have been an attempt to adjust to the loss of the temple cult.<sup>62</sup> Most of his information is unparalleled in the prior heresiological sources. Irenaeus did not attest that the Ebionites championed the theory of false pericopes when he remarked that they exegeted the prophets in a “curious” (*curiosius*) way (cf. *Haer.* 1.26.2).<sup>63</sup> The adjective meant that they studied the Jewish Scriptures in a diligent or overscrupulous way.<sup>64</sup> When Irenaeus reproached the Ebionites for refusing the “commixture” (*commixtio*) of the heavenly wine and wishing it to be water only, he was using metaphorical language to chide them for admitting Jesus’s human nature but not his divine one (5.1.3).<sup>65</sup> He was not hinting that they celebrated the Eucharist with water rather than wine (contra Epiphanius, *Pan* 30.16.1).<sup>66</sup>

Epiphanius ascribed a wealth of material to the Ebionites. First, two of his sources, *Circuits of Peter* (Περίοδοι Πέτρου; 30.15.1–3) and the *Ascents of James* (Ἀναβαθμοί Ἰακώβου; 30.16.7), were related to the *Pseudo-Clementines*. This explains the depiction of Jesus as the prophet like Moses, the repeated ritual washings, and the critique of the sacrificial cult. F. Stanley Jones reckons that *Circuits of Peter* was the *Grundchrift* or “Basic Writing” redacted in the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*,<sup>67</sup> but other scholars are unsure that Epiphanius’s source can be matched to a known text.<sup>68</sup> There is an academic consensus that another source underlies *Recognitions* 1.27.1–71.6 or 1.33.3–71.6. Robert E. Van Vorst’s monograph on the source identified it as the *Ascents of James*, the title of which may have been coined based on the scene where James ascended the stairs of the

<sup>62</sup> For analysis of this theory, see Schoeps, *Theologie*, 155–169; idem, *Jewish Christianity*, 82–4, 88–92.

<sup>63</sup> Schoeps, *Theologie*, 159, 166, 466; Idem, *Jewish Christianity*, 88; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 259–60. Häkkinen, (“Ebionites,” 259 n.35) also suggests that Irenaeus may have found the Ebionites’ reading of Isa 7:14 to be a curious one.

<sup>64</sup> Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 20; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 437; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 46–7; Paget, *Jews*, 358.

<sup>65</sup> Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 266 n.50; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 430, 434, 434 n.40. For the Latin text, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 106–7.

<sup>66</sup> Contra Schoeps, *Theologie*, 194 n.3; idem, *Jewish Christianity*, 113; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 20; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 21–2.

<sup>67</sup> F. Stanley Jones, “Jewish Christianity of the *Pseudo-Clementines*” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics”*, 315–34; cf. Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, TU 70 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), 265; Schoeps, *Theologie*, 461–79; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 31; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 453. However, Jones rejects the reconstruction of another hypothetical document behind the *Grundchrift* entitled the “Preaching of Peter” (Κηρύγματι Πέτρου) as one of the “fantasies of scholarly imagination” (p. 316). Likewise, Graham Stanton (“Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 311) comments that the existence of the hypothetical Κηρύγματι Πέτρου “seems to be disappearing into thin air.” See the earlier source-critical reconstructions in Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum*, 137–220; Schoeps, *Theologie*, 37–67, 457–79; Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 59–62.

<sup>68</sup> Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 263; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 244.

temple,<sup>69</sup> while F. Stanley Jones's monograph on this source contests this identification.<sup>70</sup> Richard Bauckham concedes that the identification of the source is debated, but designates it as the *Ascents of James* as a matter of convenience.<sup>71</sup> Van Voorst deems Epiphanius's classification of the source as Ebionite to be incompatible with its incarnational Christology (e.g., *Rec.* 1.43.1; 60.7; 63.1) and its lack of any idealization of poverty,<sup>72</sup> while Jones speculates that the author was a Jewish bishop serving under the authority of the non-Jewish Christian bishop of Jerusalem Narcissus.<sup>73</sup> Bauckham has poked holes into their arguments against the Ebionite character of the *Ascents of James*,<sup>74</sup> but he does not question whether Epiphanius was actually correct about the origin of this source.<sup>75</sup>

Second, Epiphanius had a Gospel in his possession that he mistook as the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, though he deprecated it as a falsified version of Matthew's Gospel (30.3.7; 13.2).<sup>76</sup> Most scholars distinguish it from the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* by labelling it the *Gospel of the Ebionites*. His citations of the *Gospel of the Ebionites* (cf. 30.13.2–3, 4, 6, 7–8; 14.3, 5; 16.5; 22.4) do not overlap with the Patristic quotations of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, harmonize details from all three Synoptics in the baptismal narratives (30.13.4, 6, 7–8), and signal that the text was originally written in Greek due to the wordplay between ἑγκρίς (“honey-cake”) and ἀκρίς (“locust”) in 30.13.4 or the addition of μὴ (“not”) before ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα (“I desired with desire”) in

<sup>69</sup> Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish Christian Community*, SBLDS 112 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 45–6; cf. Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 31; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 265; Bauckham (“The Origin of the Ebionites,” 165) notes that this is unclear yet labels that section of the *Recognitions* as the *Ascents of James* as a matter of convenience.

<sup>70</sup> F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1:27–71*, SBLTT 37 (Christian Apocrypha Series 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 35, 147–8; cf. Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements,” 318–9.

<sup>71</sup> Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 165.

<sup>72</sup> Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James*, 179–80. Note that Jones (*An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 161) and Bauckham (“The Origin of the Ebionites,” 171) argue that the phrase “eternal Christ” may not entail that the Messiah was personally pre-existent and that these verses may be redactional insertions.

<sup>73</sup> Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 166–7.

<sup>74</sup> Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 165–71; cf. Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements,” 318 n. 39. For instance, the absence of the epithet “poor ones” or an ideal of poverty does not prove that the source was not written by an Ebionite and the antagonistic attitude towards Paul as a “certain hostile person” (1.70.1) is consistent with the Patristic depiction of the Ebionites.

<sup>75</sup> Alfred Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den judenchristlichen Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Literatur und Geschichte der Judenchristen*, TU 37.1 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), 175–241; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 423–4; Paget, *Jews*, 338–9.

<sup>76</sup> For scholars who judge Epiphanius to have been right in his assessment, see Schmidtke, *Neue Fragment*, 166–246; Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 58; Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 83, 84–5, 86–7; Kinzig, “The Nazoraeans,” 473; Beatrice, “Apostolic Fathers,” 158–9, 169–76, 188–9; Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, 26–7, 65–75, 102–7.

30.22.4.<sup>77</sup> The substitution of “honey-cakes” for “locusts” when recounting John the Baptizer’s diet and the insertion of μή in Luke 22:15, negating Jesus’s stated desire to eat the Passover meal, was designed to avoid the implications that John and Jesus ate meat.<sup>78</sup> In another verse from their “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον), Jesus warned his hearers of the consequences if they did not cease sacrificing (30.16.5). The title *Gospel of the Ebionites* may be a misnomer, for Epiphanius may have discovered the Gospel in Cyprus and misattributed it to Irenaeus’s Ebionites.<sup>79</sup>

Third, Epiphanius reasoned that Elxai had joined the ranks of Ebion’s followers (30.3.2; 17.5), which is why they allegedly visualized Christ as a gigantic angel (30.3.2; 17.6–7; cf. 19.4.1–2; 53.1.9; *Ref.* 9.13.2–3), contemplated that Christ had been reincarnated several times since Adam (30.3.3–4; cf. 53.8.1), and recited a formula from the *Book of Elchesai* after immersing when falling ill or getting bitten by a snake (30.17.4; cf. 19.1.6; 6.4; *Ref.* 9.15.2, 5). No one before Epiphanius associated the Elchasaïtes with the Ebionites, but, as Luomanen stresses, it is not impossible that the Ebionites whom Epiphanius met had come into contact with Elchasaïte missionaries.<sup>80</sup> It is more probable that Epipha-

<sup>77</sup> Vielhauer and Strecker, “Jewish Christian Gospels,” 166–71; Schoeps, *Theologie*, 25–30, 366–80; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 30–1; Klijn, *Gospel Tradition*, 27–8, 30, 38–9, 41, 65–77; Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 51–4; Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 164, 172; Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites,” 188–200; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 262–3; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 457–61; Luomanen, *Jewish-Christian Sects*, 83, 145–61, 251–2; Paget, *Jews*, 339–41; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 177–8, 181–2, 221–33; Michael J. Kok, “Did Papias of Hierapolis Use the Gospel according to the Hebrews as a Source?” *JECs* 25:1 (2017): 29–53, here 43–4; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 8, 10, 171–261. In light of this evidence, Mimouni’s confidence that the *Gospel of the Ebionites* originated in Hebrew or Aramaic before it was translated into Greek seems to be mistaken (cf. *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 223).

<sup>78</sup> Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 59; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 31; Vielhauer and Strecker, “Jewish Christian Gospels,” 168; Klijn, *Gospel Tradition*, 41, 68, 77; Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 51–2; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 262; Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, 76; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Sects*, 37; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 223–6, 253–4, 258–9. Skarsaune challenges the consensus that the *Gospel of the Ebionites* promoted vegetarianism. He argues that Epiphanius discovered the *Gospel of the Ebionites* at a late stage and that he interpolated quotations from it into an earlier draft of his chapter only in 30.13–14, so he attributes the passage in 30.22.4 to the *Circuits of Peter* (cf. “The Ebionites,” 457–8, 459–60). Skarsaune does not interpret the passage in 30.13.4 as concerned to transform John into a vegetarian, for locusts may not have qualified as meat (cf. 30.18.7–19.4), and the point was to compare John’s diet to the manna that the Israelites ate in the wilderness (cf. Exod 16:31; Num 11:8). I disagree with confining Epiphanius’s quotations of the *Gospel of the Ebionites* to 30.13–14 and, since Skarsaune grants that the prophet Christology of the *Gospel of the Ebionites* shows that it was a “near theological relative” of the *Grundschrift* of the *Pseudo-Clementines* (p.261), it is not unlikely that it shared the same ethical concern for vegetarianism. Jones (*An Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 148–9) even goes so far as to argue that the source of *Recognitions* 1.27–71 was dependent on the *Gospel of the Ebionites*.

<sup>79</sup> Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 461.

<sup>80</sup> Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 43.



nus constructed “the Elchasaite bridge,” to employ Broadhead’s metaphor, to artificially link the Ebionites to the Elchasaïtes.<sup>81</sup> Earlier heresiologists reported that the Elchasaïtes regarded Christ as a mere human who had been reborn over many lifetimes (cf. *Ref.* 9.14.1), practiced circumcision and the precepts of Moses (cf. *Ref.* 9.14.1; 16.3), and spurned Paul’s letters (cf. Origen, in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 6.38). Jewish circles in Western Syria and the Transjordan who disseminated the sources of the *Pseudo-Clementines* may have been familiar with the *Book of Elchasaï* or crossed paths with Elchasaïte preachers, given their doctrine of the successive manifestations of the true prophet since Adam (cf. *Hom.* 3.20.2) or the mystical veneration of water in their rites (cf. *Rec.* 6.8–9; *Hom.* 11.24–26).<sup>82</sup> Epiphanius may have noticed these parallels in forging a connection between Irenaeus’s Ebionites and the Elchasaïtes.<sup>83</sup>

Some scholars place too much credence in Epiphanius’s reconstruction of the Ebionites, maintaining that they were the successors of Hellenistic wing of the Jerusalem Church (cf. Acts 6:1–7:53) or came under Essenic, Samaritan, or Elchasaïte influences.<sup>84</sup> It is more plausible that Epiphanius erred in assuming that the Ebionites were a single group and that the variety of sources that he had at his disposal were all Ebionite works.<sup>85</sup> He did not hesitate to fabricate dialogues between himself and the Ebionites (e.g., 30.15.4; 18.7, 9; cf. 23.4.1–7; 24.5.5); he was much more detailed when recounting his actual interaction with a Jewish Christian named Joseph of Tiberius (cf. 30.4–12).<sup>86</sup> Epiphanius’s presentation of the Ebionites’ theological worldview as syncretistic and internally inconsistent was intentional, for he began his exposé on the Ebionites in 30.1.1 by painting Ebion as a “monstrosity with many shapes” (πολύμορφον τεράστιον) or “a many-headed hydra” (πολυκεφάλου ὕδρας) who borrowed all kinds of

<sup>81</sup> Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 203.

<sup>82</sup> Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, “Elchasaïtes and Their Book” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics,”* 352–6; Jones, “Jewish Christianity,” 323–4.

<sup>83</sup> Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 28–38, 43; Josef Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, 187 n. 23; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 257, 259; Luttikhuisen, “Elchasaïtes and Their Book,” 350–3, 353–6; Skarsaune, “Ebionites,” 453; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 203–6; Paget, *Jews*, 335.

<sup>84</sup> Ritschl, *Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*, 204–48; Hilgenfeld, *Judenthum*, 88–108; Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 322–31; Schoeps, *Theologie*, 457–79; Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 57–65; Bauckham, “The Origen of the Ebionites,” 163–180; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 41–9, 161–5; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 220–33, 238–47.

<sup>85</sup> For a more critical handling of the wealth of material attributed to the Ebionites in *Panarion* 30, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 28–38, 43; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 148–9; Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites,” 185–208; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 256–7, 259–65; Skarsaune, “Ebionites,” 423–4, 450–561; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 190–206; Paget, *Jews*, 329–41.

<sup>86</sup> Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 453.

ideas from competing schools of thought indiscriminately.<sup>87</sup> He aimed to show that they fell short of both Christian and Jewish “orthodoxy” in their selective dismissal of the parts of the Hebrew Bible that did not align with their attitudes concerning vegetarianism and sacrifice.<sup>88</sup> Joseph Verheyden’s verdict on Epiphanius is apt: “To the opinion of many modern scholars, he has also composed the most confusing survey, an achievement that is not to be underestimated in the field of patristic heresiology.”<sup>89</sup>

Considering Epiphanius’s penchant for (mis)ascribing a range of sources to the Ebionites, we cannot determine whether any of the heresiologists were aware of the salacious gossip about Paul’s backstory that Epiphanius relayed in *Panarion* 30.16.8–9. Granted, the Ebionites’ disdain for Paul was widely noted and Origen complained that, just as Paul was struck at the order of the Jerusalem high priest (cf. Acts 23:3), the Ebionites attacked Paul “with shameful words” (λόγοις δυσφήμοις; cf. *Hom. Jer.* 19.12).<sup>90</sup> Epiphanius was the first to report the allegation that Paul had a Greek ethnic background and that his decision to get circumcised and become a “proselyte” (προσήλυτος) was motivated by his infatuation with the daughter of a priest in Jerusalem. Enraged over his failure to marry her, he denounced circumcision, the Sabbath, and other Jewish legislations in his writings. Epiphanius’s source for this story is ultimately unknown.<sup>91</sup> It may have been contained in a text that parodied the narratives told in the canonical *Acts of the Apostles* (cf. 30.16.6).<sup>92</sup> Other scholars attribute it to the *Ascents of James* (cf. 30.16.7),<sup>93</sup> though, if Epiphanius was referring to the source behind *Recognitions* 1.27[33]–71 under this title, then he either had a different version of the text or the story was excised out of it. Hyam Maccoby may be the only modern scholar who judged that this tale had some credibility. Few Pauline scholars have followed him in disallowing that Paul had a Jewish and Pharisaic pedigree altogether.<sup>94</sup> He conceded that the image of Paul as a disappointed suitor was a romantic invention.<sup>95</sup> Even so, he saw a glimmer of truth in the depiction of Paul as a non-Jewish proselyte who had a superficial grasp on Jewish traditions and who briefly served the Sadducean high priest’s

<sup>87</sup> Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites,” 182.

<sup>88</sup> Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites,” 183.

<sup>89</sup> Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites,” 183.

<sup>90</sup> For the Greek text, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 126–9. Häkkinen (“Ebionites,” 270) and Skarsaune (“The Ebionites,” 442) suspect that Origen may have known the slander reported in *Panarion* 30.16.8–9. Alternatively, Paget (*Jews*, 361) may have been alluding to the depiction of Paul as the hostile person in the source of *Recognitions* 1.70.1–8.

<sup>91</sup> Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 37.

<sup>92</sup> Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites,” 200; Häkkinen, “Ebionites,” 264, 270.

<sup>93</sup> Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James*, 45; Jones, *An Early Jewish Christian Source*, 147; Skarsaune, “The Ebionites,” 442; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 202. This is rejected by Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” 164 n. 10.

<sup>94</sup> Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 15, 17.

<sup>95</sup> Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 181–2.



interests in suppressing the Jesus movement.<sup>96</sup> Most scholars rightly set aside the yarn that was spun about Paul as a regrettably typical example of vituperation in ancient polemical discourses.

#### 4. The Oldest Patristic Testimonies about the Nazoraeans

In the myth of origins that Epiphanius devised for the Ebionites, their founder Ebion was a successor of the Nazoraeans (30.1.1; 2.1). His history of the Nazoraeans in *Panarion* 29 is self-contradictory.<sup>97</sup> The gist of his convoluted account is that Jesus's disciples were initially known as Nazoraeans (29.1.2–3; 6.2–8; cf. Acts 24:5), then changed their name to Iessaeans when they withdrew to Egypt where Mark was evangelizing (29.1.3–4.9; 5.1–4), and finally were christened as Christians at Antioch (29.4.10). A smaller subsection of them never relinquished the epithet Nazoraeans. Epiphanius's uncertainty over whether the Nazoraeans existed at the same time as or after Cerinthus (29.1.1), a teacher whom he dated to the lifetime of the apostles (cf. 28.2.3–5; 4.1–2; 6.1–6), or emerged after the flight to Pella to escape the Roman siege of Jerusalem (cf. 29.7.7–8) reveals the depths of his confusion. In his influential monograph on the Nazoraeans, R. A. Pritz surmises that, behind the fictional story about Ebion, there was a genuine memory of a split between the Nazoraeans and Ebionites over Christology after 70 CE.<sup>98</sup> Yet there may be no historical core behind this account.

There are few items in the list of the Nazoraeans' beliefs and practices in 29.7.2–8 that separated them from other Christians. They valued both biblical Testaments (29.7.2), expected the corporate resurrection of the dead (29.7.3), proclaimed that there is one creator (29.7.3), and declared that Jesus Christ was the creator's "son" or "servant" (παῖς; 29.7.3). They differed from their fellow Christians in reading the Jewish Scriptures and Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew (29.7.4; 9.4) and practicing the rite of circumcision, the Sabbath, and other Jewish laws (29.5.4; 7.2, 5; 8.1–7). However, Epiphanius was ignorant about whether or not they espoused Cerinthus's viewpoint that Jesus was a mere man who was not born of a virgin (29.7.6) or removed the genealogies out of their Hebrew text of Matthew's Gospel (29.9.4), so he could not have had direct contact with them where he might have received answers to these questions.<sup>99</sup> His final judgment

<sup>96</sup> Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 183.

<sup>97</sup> For much of the text of *Pan.* 29, minus some of Epiphanius's tangential excursions (e.g., 29.1.4–5.3), see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 168–175. For attempts to recap Epiphanius's historical account of the Nazoraeans, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 44–5; Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 35–43; De Boer, "The Nazoreans," 245–6; Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans," 479–80; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 174–5; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 53–7.

<sup>98</sup> Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 337–8.

<sup>99</sup> Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 35; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 46;

on the Nazoraeans was that they were strictly Jews, not Christians (cf. *Pan.* 29.7.1; 9.1). Indeed, they were not welcomed in Jewish circles either, for they were cursed three times a day in the prayers in the synagogue (29.9.2).

At first glance, Epiphanius's information seems to be corroborated by Jerome. In his epistle to Augustine, Jerome mentioned that there were Nazoraeans who recited the creed that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God, was born to the virgin Mary, and suffered under Pontius Pilate before rising again (*Ep.* 112.13).<sup>100</sup> This letter was part of Jerome's extensive correspondence with Augustine over his construal of the Antioch incident in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (cf. Gal 2:11–14). Augustine was rebutting Jerome's exegesis that Peter and Paul staged a fake conflict over mixed table fellowship in Antioch and, in the process, allowed that there was a time when it was permissible for ethnically Jewish believers in Christ to keep their customs. Repudiating Augustine's tolerant position, Jerome raised the counterexample of the creedally-orthodox Nazoraeans whose efforts to maintain their Jewish and Christian identities, nevertheless, entailed that they did not belong to either community. This was supposedly proven by how they were cursed in the synagogues in the east in the benediction "of the Mineans" (*Minaeorum*). Jerome was not comfortable with how the Nazoraeans' hybridity transgressed the socially-constructed boundaries between Christians and Jews.<sup>101</sup> From his vantage point, at least their Christology was orthodox.<sup>102</sup> He was not contradicting himself when he faulted the Nazoraeans for presuming that Jesus was just the son of a carpenter (*Comm. Matt.* 13.53–54),<sup>103</sup> for, in this instance, he was not talking about the fourth-century Nazoraeans but the residents of Nazareth in Jesus's day.<sup>104</sup> Jerome was also not just making an extrapolation about the Nazoraeans' orthodoxy based on Epiphanius's chapter about them,<sup>105</sup> for Epiphanius divulged his ignorance concerning what they believed about the virginal conception of Jesus (cf. *Pan.* 29.7.6). All the same, Jerome wanted to score a point in his debate against Augustine by stipulating that it was not acceptable for a Jewish Christian to continue practicing the *Torah* even if he or she

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Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans," 473; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 62–3; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 295; Luomanen, "The Nazarenes," 295.

<sup>100</sup> For the Latin text, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 200–1. The correspondence between Jerome and Augustine on this matter is extensively analysed by Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 114–25.

<sup>101</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 207–9.

<sup>102</sup> Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 53–5; De Boer, "The Nazoreans," 240; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 155; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 122–3.

<sup>103</sup> Contra Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 47.

<sup>104</sup> Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 54–5; Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans," 474 n.56; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 173.

<sup>105</sup> Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans," 474.

affirmed the Nicene Creed, so this might call into question the objectivity of his synopsis of the Nazoraeans' Christology.<sup>106</sup>

Jerome bragged that he inherited the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* from the Nazoraeans in Beroia, which he believed was the same one that was purportedly housed in the library of Caesarea, and translated it (e.g., *Vir. ill.* 3; *Pelag.* 3.2).<sup>107</sup> His initial confidence that this Gospel was a primitive, Semitic version of Matthew's Gospel was eventually shaken.<sup>108</sup>

The majority view among scholars today is that Jerome did not have the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* in his possession, but another text labelled as the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*, or at least some fragments from it, for him to translate.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, there are overlaps between some of Jerome's quotations of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* with earlier citations of the text (e.g., *Comm. Mich.* 7.6; *Comm. Isa.* 40.9–11; *Comm. Ezech.* 16.13; cf. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.12; *Hom. Jer.* 15.4). The *Gospel according to the Hebrews* could have been translated into different languages and contained synoptic and apocryphal material like the *Gospel of Thomas* did, so that may dispel two criterions for differentiating the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* and the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*.<sup>110</sup> The Nazoraeans may have passed on a handful of excerpts from their own translation of Matthew's Gospel to Jerome (e.g., *Comm. Matt.* 2.5; 6.11; 23.35; 27.16; 27.51),<sup>111</sup> but otherwise Jerome could have just been citing earlier commentaries on the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* that he hoped to track down in the library of Caesarea.<sup>112</sup> Further, Jerome cited extracts from the Nazoraeans' commentary on Isaiah (*Comm. Isa.* 8.11–15, 19–22; 9.1; 11.1; 29.17–21; 31.6–9), which evinces their polemical engagement with rabbinic authori-

<sup>106</sup> Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 27, 68–71; idem, "The Nazarenes," 64–6; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 298.

<sup>107</sup> For the Latin text, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 210–1, 226–9. Some scholars accept that Jerome was telling the truth that he had access to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, which he copied and translated. See Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 83, 86–7; Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans," 473; Beatrice, "Apostolic Fathers," 154–8, 169–76; Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, 28–37, 76–96, 102–7.

<sup>108</sup> See *Vir. ill.* 3; *Tract. Ps.* 135; *Comm. Matt.* 12.13; *Pelag.* 3.2. In the final passage, Jerome seems to have been more cautious in conceding that it is commonly maintained that Matthew authored the Hebrew Gospel. See Jörg Frey, "Die Fragmente des Nazoräerevangeliums" in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, 626; Gregory, *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 50.

<sup>109</sup> Vielhauer and Strecker, "Jewish Christian Gospels," 154–65; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 47–9; Klijn, *Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition*, 29–30, 31–2; Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 43–51; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 164–6, 172–3; Frey, "Die Fragmente des Nazoräerevangeliums," 623–54.

<sup>110</sup> Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 84–5; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 14–6.

<sup>111</sup> Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 109–14.

<sup>112</sup> Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects*, 85–9, 89–119; Kok, "Did Papias Use," 41–3; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 182–9; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 10–6, 43–52; Luomanen, "The Nazarenes," 56–9.

ties.<sup>113</sup> In the commentary on Isaiah 9:1, Paul was commended as the last of the apostles who multiplied the preaching of the gospel throughout the world.<sup>114</sup>

The existence of followers of Jesus in Epiphanius's and Jerome's time who were known as Nazoraeans is not in doubt, but Epiphanius's reconstruction of them is once again an artificial creation. Epiphanius's account of their history is primarily indebted to the book of Acts and Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>115</sup> According to the author of Acts, the message of the apostles was that Israel's deity, the maker of heaven and earth (4:24), has raised and glorified his παῖς ("son/servant") Jesus (3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). Since Jesus was from Nazareth (2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9), his devotees were dubbed Nazoraeans and Paul was put on trial as one of the agitators among them (24:5), though his only crime was articulating his expectation of the future resurrection of the dead (23:6; 24:15, 21). According to Eusebius, the Evangelist Mark travelled to Egypt (*Eccl. Hist.* 2.16.1) and the Therapeutae discussed by Philo were Mark's students (2.16.2–17.24). The Christ followers in Jerusalem heeded the warning of an oracle and fled the city to Pella during the Jewish War against Rome (3.5.3). Since Epiphanius's portrayal of the Ebionites ended up looking so dissimilar from the one put forward by Irenaeus, he relied on the data from Acts and Eusebius to construct a traditional picture of a Jewish messianic sect. Luomanen observes that Epiphanius's Nazoraeans embodied Jewish Christians in their "simplest, stereotypic form" to facilitate comparison with the heterodox Ebionites.<sup>116</sup>

The Nazoraeans never appeared on heresiological catalogues prior to Epiphanius's *Panarion*. Pritz's explanation for this is that none of the heresiologists before Epiphanius appraised their beliefs to be unorthodox.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, he identifies the two distinct groups of Jewish Christ followers in the writings of Justin (*Dial.* 47.1–4), Origen (*Cels.* 5.61; 5.65), and Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.27.2–3) as the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans.<sup>118</sup> On the contrary, Justin's two groups

<sup>113</sup> For analysis of the Nazarenes' commentary on Isaiah, see Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 57–70; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 49–50; Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans," 475–7; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 166–71; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 71–5.

<sup>114</sup> For the Latin text, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 222–3.

<sup>115</sup> Verheyden, "Epiphanius on the Ebionites," 184–5 n. 13; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 53–7, 63–5; cf. Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 46 n. 1; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 297; Luomanen, "The Nazarenes," 61; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 296.

<sup>116</sup> Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 65–6.

<sup>117</sup> Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 75; cf. Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 317–8 n. 3; De Boer, "The Nazoreans," 252; Bauckham, "The Origin of the Ebionites," 163; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 178–9.

<sup>118</sup> Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 20–1, 23–4, 25–8; cf. Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 317–8 n. 3; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 148–9; Bauckham, "The Origin of the Ebionites," 163; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 181; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 96, 98, 107, 111.

were not divided over Christology,<sup>119</sup> but over whether non-Jewish Christ followers were obligated to obey the Law of Moses.<sup>120</sup> It is not certain that the one group who did not encourage non-Jews to do so were necessarily fans of Paul, because Justin never explicitly mentioned Paul or Paul's epistolary correspondence in his extant texts. Andreas Lindemann enumerates four possible reasons for Justin's silence: he had no knowledge of the Pauline tradition, suppressed the Pauline Epistles because Marcion appropriated them, refrained from bringing Paul up in a dialogue with someone who did not recognize Paul as an authority, or advanced his take on Paul's theology without ever naming Paul.<sup>121</sup> Justin could very well have suppressed the animosity that both groups may have felt for Paul.<sup>122</sup> As for the reports of Origen and Eusebius, it is true that the division between the Ebionites was over a matter of Christology, particularly the virginal conception of Jesus. Regardless, we cannot ignore Origen's admission that both groups hated Paul (*Cels.* 5.65), nor Eusebius's charge that neither group embraced a divine Christology.<sup>123</sup>

The Nazoraeans may have been a Jewish, Christ-believing faction who were aligning their beliefs to the creeds and canon enshrined by Catholic Christians in the fourth century.<sup>124</sup> As argued about the Ebionites above, however, it may be wrong to view the Nazoraeans through the lens inherited from Epiphanius as a sect. Rather, any non-Greek and non-Latin speaking Christ followers who did not adopt the title "Christian" (Χριστιανός or *Christianus*) may have been commonly known as Nazoraeans.<sup>125</sup> The antiquity of the title is well attested by the author of Acts and by Tertullian (e.g., *Marc.* 4.8), not to mention the rabbinic and Persian evidence.<sup>126</sup> Without Epiphanius's input, though, we might not have imagined that these references to the Nazoraeans denoted a marginal Christian sect. For instance, at one point Jerome seems to have been swayed by Epiphanius that the secondary insertion of *notzrim* in the Twelfth Benediction targeted the Jewish Christian Nazoraeans (*Ep.* 112.13; cf. *Pan.* 29.9.2), but elsewhere he seems to understand this addition to the *birkat ha-minim* as including all Christians in its scope (*Comm. Am.* 1.11–12; *Comm. Isa.* 5.18–19).<sup>127</sup> An-

<sup>119</sup> Mimouni (*Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 96) oddly reads the expression "the Messiah of God" in *Dial.* 46.1 as expressing Jesus's divinity or "Christ-God."

<sup>120</sup> Skarsaune, "The Ebionites," 445.

<sup>121</sup> A. Lindemann, *Paulus in ältesten Christentum*, BHT, 58 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 353.

<sup>122</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, 152–4.

<sup>123</sup> Paget, *Jews*, 356; Luomanen, "The Nazarenes," 67.

<sup>124</sup> Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 41–2, 105, 124–5, 301–2; Schoeps *Theologie*, 19–20; MacCoby, 175–6.

<sup>125</sup> Kinzig, "The Nazoraeans," 470–1; Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 51–3; Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 291, 293, 300.

<sup>126</sup> See the extensive review of the textual evidence for the term in Mimouni, "Les Nazoréens Recherche Étymologique Et Historique," 216–60.

<sup>127</sup> See Solomon Schechter and Israel Abrahams, "Geniza Specimens" *JQR* 10 (1898): 654–

drew Gregory contends that Epiphanius needed the Nazoraeans to be a sect to fill out his taxonomy of eighty deviant sects, twenty of which were pre-Christian, as adversarial foils for the one true bride of Christ (*Pan. Proem.1.3, 5.9; cf. Song 6:8–9*).<sup>128</sup>

This is not to say that Jerome was not acquainted with some ethnically Jewish Nazoraeans. Luomanen has corrected misunderstandings of his argument when clarifying that “it is easy to agree that, historically, there were Nazarenes who were of Jewish origin and who considered themselves as followers of Jesus.”<sup>129</sup> They may not have abandoned their *Torah*-observant way of life. Luomanen overreads the declaration that Christ “had shook off” (*excussit*) the “yoke” (*iugum*) “of the Jewish traditions” (*traditionum Iudaicarum*) in the Nazoraeans’ commentary on Isaiah 9:1 as implying the rejection of the Jews’ traditional heritage in its entirety,<sup>130</sup> rather than specifically the “errors” (*errōrēs*) or the oral traditions of the scribes and Pharisees and their rabbinic successors. The Matthean Jesus invited his audience to take on his light yoke (Matt 11:29–39), but this did not mean throwing out the law and the prophets (5:17–20). Much to Jerome’s chagrin, there were Jewish Nazoraeans whose sole difference from other Catholic Christians was their continuing observance of Jewish customs. Despite the concerted efforts by elite ecclesiastical leaders to establish boundaries separating Jews and Christians, there were social interactions between Jewish and Christian communities on the ground and even non-Jewish Christians participating in Jewish customs to various degrees for centuries.<sup>131</sup> Evidently, the Nazoraean who penned the commentary on Isaiah did not think that *Torah* observance was delegitimized by allowing for the legitimacy of Paul’s mission to the nations. This commentator may have remembered what

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9, here 656–7. Space does not permit an extended discussion of the meaning of *notzrim*. Some scholars agree with Epiphanius that the Nazoraean sect was targeted in this version of the *birkat ha-minim*. See Reuven Kimelman, “Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, 2 vols., ed. E. P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 237–8; Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 102–7; Joel Marcus, “Birkat Ha-Minim Revisited” *NTS* 55:4 (2009): 523–551, here 537–40; Mimouni, *Early Judaeo-Christianity*, 144–7, 154–5. Others argue that it cursed Christians in general. See Lawrence Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew: Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1985), 57–60; Pieter W. Van den Horst, “The Birkat ha-minim in Recent Research” *ExpTim* 105 (1994–1995): 267–8; William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 73–7, 109; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 183, 366–7 n. 51; Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 71–2, 262 n. 90; Ruth Langer, *Cursing the Christians: A History of the Birkat HaMinim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 31–2, 269–70 n. 85.

<sup>128</sup> Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 293–4.

<sup>129</sup> Luomanen, “The Nazarenes,” 60.

<sup>130</sup> Luomanen, “The Nazarenes,” 62.

<sup>131</sup> On this topic, the important study of Michelle Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE*, SCJ 13 (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004).



Jerome had forgotten about Paul's advocacy for mutual respect between the Jewish and non-Jewish members of his Christ associations (cf. Rom 14:1–15:13; 1 Cor 7:17–20).

## 5. The Ebionites, the Nazoraeans, and the Reception of Paul

The older picture of the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans as two discreet sects should be discarded. These titles were popular with numerous Jewish Christians. Again and again the Patristic writers testified that one popular Jewish conception was that Jesus was exalted to his messianic status due to his exemplary obedience to the commandments handed down by Moses and that his followers who imitate his lawful example will receive the same post-mortem vindication. It is unlikely that those who held this worldview endorsed Paul's "law-free mission to the nations" and some were suspicious that Paul had also persuaded his fellow Jews to abandon the *Torah*. The most extreme perspective, attested by Epiphanius, was to deny that Paul was Jewish at all. On the other hand, Jewish Christians were as diverse as Gentile ones in advancing a variety of messianic, prophetic, angelic, or divine Christologies, though Epiphanius was wrong in assigning a number of conflicting Christologies to a single group. There were some Jewish Christians, certainly by the fourth century if not earlier, who did not see any conflict between recognizing the divinity of Jesus and the canonicity of Paul's letters and maintaining a *Torah*-observant way of life.

It may be hazardous to draw a straight line of continuity from Paul's Jewish supporters and opponents to the Jewish Christ communities that flourished during the Patristic period. It is true that Paul had to correct misperceptions that he was fostering antinomianism in his ethnically-diverse congregations during his lifetime (Rom 3:8; cf. Acts 21:21). Irrespective of how scholars evaluate the historicity of Eusebius's tradition about the flight to Pella,<sup>132</sup> the earliest account of the Ebionites in Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* is separated from Paul's undisputed epistles by over a century. Much transpired during this gap, includ-

<sup>132</sup> For scepticism about this tradition, see S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1957), 167–84; Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, 200–13; Josef Verheyden, "The Flight of the Christians to Pella" *ETL* 66:4 (1990): 368–84; Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, 174–5. For rebuttals, see Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 22–8; M. Simon, "La Migration à Pella – Légende ou réalité?" *RSR* 60 (1972): 37–54; Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 122–7; Craig R. Koester, "The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition" *CBQ* 51:1 (1989): 90–106; Vicky Balabansky, *Eschatology in the Making: Mark, Matthew and the Didache*, SNTSMS 97 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100–34; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 145–8; Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 89. Interestingly, despite discounting the Pella tradition as a myth of origin of a Jewish community that lived there, Lüdemann (*Opposition to Paul*, 31, 198–9) finds substantial continuity in the anti-Paulinism of pre- and post-70 CE Jewish Christ followers.



ing two failed Jewish revolts against Rome in 66–73 CE and 132–135 CE. It would be almost another two centuries before Epiphanius provided an account of the Nazoraeans in his *Panarion*, in a post-Constantinian Christian Roman Empire. Moreover, Paul's Jewish interpreters in subsequent centuries may have been formulating their opinions about Paul in reaction to the interpretations of Paul's letters that prevailed in their day. What this review of the reception of Paul among Jewish Christ-believing interpreters during the Patristic period shows is that Paul's treatment of the "works of the law" in his letters is amenable to different interpretations. Some regarded him as an apostate and others as a prophet to the nations. The debate over whether Paul was "within Judaism" has roots in the Patristic era.



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